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Francis II - 1226

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THE
LIFE OF SAINT FRANCIS
BY
SAINT BONAVENTURA

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THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF FRANCISCAN STUD
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Saint Francis Preaching to the birds.
from a fresco by Giotto in the Upper Church Assisi.

The LIFE of SAINT FRANCIS

BY SAINT BONAVENTURA

MCMXXVI · PUBLISHED · BY · J · M · DENT & SONS · LD · ALDINE · HOUSE · LONDON

Francesco d'Assisi, Saint.
Legend. Legenda Bonaventurae

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PROLOGUE

Saint Francis: the herald of God

1. The grace of God our Saviour hath in these latter days appeared in His servant Francis unto all such as be truly humble, and lovers of holy Poverty, who, adoring the overflowing mercy of God seen in him, are taught by his ensample to utterly deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live after the manner of Christ, thirsting with unwearied desire for the blessed hope. For God Most High regarded him, as one that truly was poor and of a contrite spirit, with so great condescension of His favour as that not only did He raise him up in his need from the dust of his worldly way of life, but also made him a true professor, leader, and herald of Gospel perfection. Thus He gave him for a light unto believers, that by bearing witness of the light he might prepare for the Lord the way of light and peace in the hearts of the faithful. For Francis, even as the morning star in the midst of a cloud, shining with the bright beams of his life and teaching, by his dazzling radiance led into the light them that sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, and, like unto the rainbow giving light in the bright clouds, set forth in himself the seal of the Lord's covenant. He preached the gospel of peace and salvation unto men, himself an Angel of the true peace, ordained of God to follow in the likeness of the Forerunner, that, preparing in the desert the way

The Angel of the Sixth Seal

of sublimest Poverty, he might preach repentance by his ensample and words alike. For, firstly, he was endowed with the gifts of heavenly grace; next, enriched by the merits of triumphant virtue; filled with the spirit of prophecy and appointed unto angelic ministries; thereafter, wholly set on fire by the kindling of the Seraph, and, like the prophet, borne aloft in a chariot of fire; wherefore it is reasonably proven, and clearly apparent from the witness of his whole life, that he came in the spirit and power of Elias.

In like wise, he is thought to be not unmeetly set forth in the true prophecy of that other friend of the Bridegroom, the Apostle and Evangelist John, under the similitude of the Angel ascending from the sunrising and bearing the seal of the Living God. For at the opening of the sixth seal, I saw, saith John in the Apocalypse, another Angel ascending from the sunrising and bearing the seal of the Living God.

2. Now that this Angel was indeed that messenger of God, beloved of Christ, our ensample and the world's wonder, Francis, the servant of God, we may with full assurance conclude, when we consider the heights of lofty saintliness whereunto he attained, and whereby, living among men, he was an imitator of the purity of the Angels, and was also set as an ensample unto them that do perfectly follow after Christ. That this belief should be faithfully and devoutly held we are convinced by the vocation that he shewed to call to weeping and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth, and to set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry,

by the sign of his penitent's Cross and habit fashioned like unto a Cross. Moreover, it is further confirmed, with unanswerable witness unto its truth, by the seal of the likeness of the Living God, to wit, of Christ Crucified, the which was imprinted on his body, not by the power of nature or the skill of art, but rather by the marvellous might of the Spirit of the Living God.

3. Feeling myself unworthy and insufficient to relate the life most worthy of all imitation of this most venerable man, I should have in no wise attempted it, had not the glowing love of the Brethren moved me thereunto, and the unanimous importunity of the Chapter General incited me, and that devotion compelled me, which I am bound to feel for our holy Father. For I, who remember as though it happened but yesterday how I was snatched from the jaws of death, while yet a child, by his invocation and merits, should fear to be convicted of the sin of ingratitude did I refrain from publishing his praises. And this was with me the chief motive for undertaking this task, to wit, that I, who own my life of body and mind to have been preserved unto me by God through his means, and have proved his power in mine own person, and knew the virtues of his life, might collect as best I could, albeit I could not fully, his deeds and words,—fragments, as it were, overlooked in part, in part scattered,—that they might not be utterly lost on the death of those that lived with the servant of God.

4. Accordingly, that the true story of his life might be handed down unto posterity by me the more assuredly and clearly, I betook me unto the

ncern- g this ory of is life

place of his birth, and there did hold diligent converse with his familiar friends that were yet living, touching the manner of life of the holy man and his passing away; and with those in especial that were well acquainted with his holiness, and were his chief followers, who may be implicitly believed by reason of their well-known truthfulness and approved uprightness. But in relating the things that through His servant God vouchsafed to work, I deemed it best to shun all fantastic ornaments of style, forasmuch as that the devotion of the reader increaseth more by a simple than by an ornate speech. Nor have I always woven together the history according unto chronology, that I might avoid confusion, but I rather endeavoured to preserve a more coherent order, setting down sometimes facts of divers kinds that belong unto the same period, sometimes facts of the same kind that belong unto divers periods, as they seemed best to fit in together.

5. Now the beginning of the life of Francis, its course, and its consummation, are divided into fifteen chapters, as set down below, and thuswise described.

The first treateth of his manner of life in the secular state.

The second, of his perfect conversion unto God, and of the repairing of the three churches.

The third, of the founding of his Religion, and sanction of the Rule.

The fourth, of the advancement of the Order under his hand, and of the confirmation of the Rule already sanctioned.

The fifth, of the austerity of his life, and of how all created things afforded him comfort. **The Chapters**

The sixth, of his humility and obedience, and of the divine condescensions shewn unto him at will.

The seventh, of his love for Poverty, and of the wondrous supplying of his needs.

The eighth, of the kindly impulses of his piety, and of how the creatures lacking understanding seemed to be made subject unto him.

The ninth, of his ardent love, and yearning for martyrdom.

The tenth, of his zeal and efficacy in prayer.

The eleventh, of his understanding of the Scriptures, and of his spirit of prophecy.

The twelfth, of the efficacy of his preaching, and of his gift of healing.

The thirteenth, of the sacred stigmata.

The fourteenth, of his sufferings and death.

The fifteenth, of his canonisation, and the translation of his body.

Thereafter is added some account of the miracles shewn after his blessed departure.

HERE BEGINNETH THE LIFE OF THE BLESSED FRANCIS

CHAPTER I

OF HIS MANNER OF LIFE IN THE SECULAR STATE

Saint Francis in youth

1. THERE was a man in the city of Assisi, by name Francis, whose memory is blessed, for that God, graciously preventing him with the blessings of goodness, delivered him in His mercy from the perils of this present life, and abundantly filled him with the gifts of heavenly grace. For, albeit in his youth he was reared in vanity amid the vain sons of men, and, after gaining some knowledge of letters, was appointed unto a profitable business of merchandise, nevertheless, by the aid of the divine protection, he went not astray among the wanton youths after the lusts of the flesh, albeit given up unto pleasures; nor among the covetous merchants, albeit intent on his gains, did he put his trust in money and treasure. For there was divinely implanted in the heart of the young Francis a certain generous compassion toward the poor, the which, growing up with him from infancy, had so filled his heart with kindliness that, when he came to be no deaf hearer of the Gospel, he was minded to give unto all that asked of him, in

His almsgiving

especial if they pleaded the love of God. But once on a time, when he had been busied with the cares of his trading, and, contrary unto his wont, had sent empty away a certain beggar who besought an alms for the love of God, he forthwith, returning unto his pitiful mind, ran after him, and bestowed alms in merciful wise upon him; promising unto the Lord God that thenceforward he would never, while he could, refuse any that asked of him, pleading the love of God. And this promise with unwearied goodness he did observe until his death, thereby winning abundant increase of the love and grace of God. For he was wont to say in after time, when he had perfectly put on Christ, that, even while he was in the secular state, he could scarce ever hear words telling of the love of God, and remain unmoved in heart. Assuredly the charm of his gentleness and his courtly bearing, his submissiveness and docility surpassing men's wont, his open-handed largesse even beyond his means, were all clear tokens of the fair disposition of the youth, and seemed to be a presage of the abundance of divine blessing that should thereafter be poured out more richly upon him.

A certain citizen of Assisi, a simpleton as was believed, yet one taught of God, whensoever he met Francis going through the city, would doff his cloak and spread the garment before his feet, declaring that Francis was worthy of all honour, as one that should ere long do mighty deeds, and was on this account to be splendidly honoured by all the faithful.

2. But as yet Francis knew not the intent of God concerning him, forasmuch as he was both drawn away unto external things by his father's calling, and weighed down toward earthly things by the corruption inborn in our nature, and had not yet learned to contemplate heavenly things, nor accustomed himself to taste of divine. And, because the infliction of tribulation giveth understanding unto the spirit, the hand of the Lord was upon him and the changes of the right hand of the Most High, afflicting his body with protracted sickness, that so He might prepare his soul for the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Now when he had regained his bodily strength, and had made ready for himself in his wonted fashion meet apparel, he met a certain soldier, of noble birth, but poor and ill-clad; whereupon, compassionating his poverty, with a kindly impulse he forthwith did off his garments and put them on him, thus in one act fulfilling a twofold ministry of kindliness, insomuch as he both covered the shame of a noble knight, and relieved the destitution of a poor man.

and courtesy

3. Now on the night following, when he had yielded himself unto sleep, the divine mercy shewed him a fair and great palace, together with military accoutrements adorned with the sign of the Cross of Christ, thus setting forth unto him that the mercy he had shewn unto the poor soldier for the love of the King Most High was to be recompensed by this peerless reward. Accordingly, when he enquired whose were these things, answer was made him by a divine declaration that they all were his own and his soldiers'. Then, waking at early morn,—since he had not yet prac-

and in his exceeding fervour was wholly absorbed in God, there appeared unto him Christ Jesus in the likeness of One Crucified. Beholding Him, his soul was melted within him, and so deeply was the remembrance of Christ's Passion imprinted inwardly on his heart that from that hour, whensoever he recalled the Crucifixion of Christ, he could scarce refrain from tears and from groaning aloud; even as he himself in after time told his friends, when he was drawing nigh his end. For in sooth by this vision the man of God understood that Gospel saying to be addressed unto him: "If thou wilt come after Me, deny thyself, and take up thy cross, and follow Me."

6. From that time forth, he put on the spirit of poverty, the feeling of humility, and the love of inward godliness. For whereas aforetime not only the company, but even the distant sight, of lepers had inspired him with violent loathing, now, for the sake of Christ Crucified,—Who, saith the prophet, appeared despised, and marred as a leper,—and that he might fully vanquish self, he would render unto the lepers humble and kindly services in his benevolent goodness. For he would often visit their dwellings, and bestow alms upon them with a bountiful hand, and with a deep impulse of pity would kiss their hands and faces. Unto poor folk that begged of him, he was fain to give not his goods alone, but his very self, at times stripping off his garments, at times tearing or cutting them, to bestow upon them, when he had naught else at hand. Poor priests, moreover, he would succour reverently and piously,

more especially with ornaments for the altar, whereby he both became a sharer in the divine worship, and supplied the needs of the worshippers.

and with beggars

Now about this time he was visiting, with devout reverence, the shrine of the Apostle Peter, and beheld a host of beggars before the doors of the church; thereupon, constrained in part by gentle piety, in part led by the love of poverty, he bestowed his own garments on one of the neediest, and, clad in his rags, passed that day in the midst of the beggars, with unwonted gladness of spirit; that so, despising worldly repute, he might attain by gradual steps unto Gospel perfection. He kept right strict watch over the mortification of the flesh, that he might bear the Cross of Christ, the which he bore inwardly in his heart, outwardly also in his body. So all these things were wrought by the man of God, Francis, ere yet he had separated himself from the world in habit or way of life.

CHAPTER II

OF HIS PERFECT CONVERSION UNTO GOD, AND OF THE REPAIRING OF THE THREE CHURCHES

1 to St. n's

1. FORASMUCH as the servant of the Most High had none to instruct him in this way except Christ, His mercy was now further vouchsafed unto him in visitations of His sweet grace. For on a certain day, when he had gone forth to meditate in the fields, he was walking nigh the church of Saint Damian, which from its exceeding great age was threatening to fall, and, at the prompting of the Spirit, went within to pray. Prostrating himself before an Image of the Crucified, he was filled with no small consolation of spirit as he prayed. And as with eyes full of tears he gazed upon the Lord's Cross, he heard with his bodily ears a Voice proceeding from that Cross, saying thrice: "Francis, go and repair My House, which, as thou seest, is falling utterly into ruin." Francis trembled, being alone in the church, and was astonied at the sound of such a wondrous Voice, and, perceiving in his heart the might of the divine speech, was carried out of himself in ecstasy. When at length he came unto himself again, he prepared to obey, and devoted himself wholly unto the behest to repai the material church; howbeit, the principal inter of the message had regard unto that Churc

which Christ had purchased with His own blood, even as the Holy Spirit taught him, and as he himself afterward revealed unto the Brethren.

he selleth his goods

Accordingly he rose up, and, fortifying himself with the sign of the Cross, he put together cloth stuffs for sale, and hastened unto the city that is called Foligno, and there sold the goods that he had brought and the horse whereon he had ridden. Then this joyful merchant, putting together his gains, departed on his return for Assisi, and there did reverently enter the church concerning whose repair he had received the command. Finding there a poor priest, he shewed him due reverence, and proffered him the money for the repair of the church, and the use of the poor, humbly petitioning that he would permit him to sojourn with him for a time. The priest granted him to sojourn there, but, for fear of his parents, refused the money, whereupon that true despiser of monies threw it on a window-ledge, valuing it no more than dust that is trodden under foot.

2. But when his father learnt that the servant of God was tarrying with the priest aforesaid, he was sore vexed in spirit, and ran unto the place. And Francis, being yet but a newly-recruited soldier of Christ, when he heard the threats of them that pursued him, and knew beforehand of their coming, was fain to give place unto wrath, and hid himself in a certain secret pit; therein for some days he lay concealed, beseeching the Lord without ceasing, and with floods of tears, that He would deliver his soul from the hands of them that pursued him, and would by His gracious

His father's wrath

favour fulfil the holy purposes wherewith He had inspired him. Then, filled with an overflowing joy, he began to blame himself for his craven sloth, and, leaving his hiding-place, and casting aside his fear, he took his way toward the city of Assisi. But when the townsfolk beheld him unkempt in appearance, and changed in mind, and on this account deemed him to have lost his senses, they rushed upon him with mud of the streets and stones, and mocked him with loud shouts as a fool and madman. But the servant of the Lord, not moved or overborne by any insults, passed through all as one deaf unto them. When his father heard these outcries, he ran out at once, not to deliver him, but rather to destroy him; laying aside all compunction, he dragged him into the house, and there afflicted him first with words, then with stripes and bonds. But Francis was thereby rendered but the more eager and valiant to carry out that which he had begun, remembering that saying of the Gospel: "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

3. After a little space, on his father's departure from the country, his mother,—who misliked her husband's dealings, and deemed it hopeless to soften the unyielding constancy of her son,—freed him from his bonds, and let him go forth. Then he, giving thanks unto the Lord Almighty, returned unto the place where he had been afore. When his father returned, and found him not in the house, heaping reproaches on his wife, he ran in fury unto that place, intending, if he could not bring him back, at least to drive him from the

province. But Francis, strengthened of God, of his own accord came forth to meet his raging father, crying aloud that he cared naught for his bonds and stripes, yea more, protesting that he would gladly endure all hardships for the sake of Christ. Accordingly, when his father saw that he could not bring him back, he turned his thoughts unto the recovery of the money, the which, when he had at length found it on the window-ledge, somewhat soothed his rage, the thirst of avarice being relieved, as it were, by a draught of money.

Before the Bishop

4. Then this father according unto the flesh was fain to take this son of grace, now stripped of his wealth, before the Bishop of the city, that into his hands he might resign his claim unto his father's inheritance, and render up all that had been his. This that true lover of poverty shewed himself right ready to do, and coming into the Bishop's presence, he brooked no delays, he was kept back of none, tarried for no speech, nor spake himself, but at once did off all his garments, and restored them unto his father. Then was the man of God seen to have a hairshirt next his skin under his rich apparel. Yea more, as one drunk with wondrous fervour of spirit, he threw aside even his breeches, and stood up naked in the presence of all, saying unto his father: "Hitherto I have called thee my father on earth, but henceforth I can confidently say 'Our Father, Which art in heaven,' with Whom I have laid up my whole treasure, and on Whom I have set my whole trust and hope." The Bishop, seeing this, and marvelling at such exceeding fervour in the

He is attacked by robbers

man of God, rose forthwith, and, weeping, put his arms round him; then, devout and kindly man as he was, covered him with the cloak wherewith he himself was clad, bidding his servants give him something to clothe his limbs withal, and there was brought unto him a mean and rough tunic of a farm-servant of the Bishop. This Francis gladly received, and with his own hand marked it with the sign of the Cross, with a piece of chalk that he chanced upon, thus making it a garment meet for a man crucified, poor, and half naked. Thus, then, the servant of the Most High King was left despoiled, that he might follow the Lord Whom he loved, Who had been despoiled and crucified; thus he was fortified with the Cross, that he might entrust his soul unto that wood of salvation, that should bring him forth unscathed from the shipwreck of the world.

5. Thereafter, this despiser of the world, loosed from the bonds of worldly desires, left the city, and, glad and free, sought an hidden solitude where he might hearken in loneliness and silence unto the hid treasures of the divine converse. And while the man of God, Francis, was making his way through a certain wood, chanting praises unto the Lord in the French tongue, and rejoicing, it chanced that some robbers rushed out on him from their hiding-places. With fierce mien they asked the man of God who he was, and he, full of confidence, gave a prophetic answer, saying: "I am a herald of the great King." Then they fell upon him, and cast him into a ditch full of snow, crying: "Lie there, lout, thou herald of God!" But he, on their departure, climbed

out of the ditch, and, uplifted with exceeding gladness, with yet louder voice began to make the woods echo with praises unto the Creator of all.

His pitifulness and healing power

6. When he came unto a neighbouring monastery, he asked an alms as a beggar, and received it as one unrecognised and despised. Departing thence, he came unto Gubbio, where he was recognised and entertained by a friend of former days, and was clad by him with a poor tunic, such as became the little poor one of Christ.

Thence that lover of utterest humility betook himself unto the lepers, and abode among them, with all diligence serving them all for the love of God. He would bathe their feet, and bind up their sores, drawing forth the corrupt matter from their wounds, and wiping away the blood; yea, in his marvellous devotion, he would even kiss their ulcerated wounds, he that was soon to be a Gospel physician. Wherefore he obtained from the Lord such power as that he received a marvellous efficacy in marvellously cleansing both soul and body from disease. I will relate one instance out of many, whereby the fame of the man of God was afterward bruited abroad.

A man in the county of Spoleto had his mouth and jaw eaten away by the ravages of a loathsome disease, and received no succour from any remedy of the physicians. It chanced that, after visiting the shrines of the holy Apostles to implore their merits, he was returning from his pilgrimage, and met the servant of God. When out of devotion he was fain to kiss his footprints, Francis in his humility would not brook it, but kissed on the

He repaireth three churches

mouth him that had been fain to kiss his feet. Lo, as in his wondrous goodness the servant of the lepers, Francis, touched that loathsome sore with his holy lips, the disease utterly vanished, and the sick man at once regained his longed-for health. I know not which of these twain is the more rightly to be marvelled at, the depth of humility in such a gracious embrace, or the excellence of power in such an astounding miracle.

7. Francis, now stablished in the humility of Christ, recalled unto mind the obedience laid upon him by the Crucifix as to the repairing of the church of Saint Damian, and like one truly obedient returned unto Assisi, that he might, if even by begging, obtain means to accomplish the divine behest. Laying aside all shamefastness for the love of the Poor Man Crucified, he went about begging from those who had known him in his affluence, bearing the loads of stones on his frail body, worn with fasting. When the church aforesaid had been repaired, the Lord helping him, and the devotion of the citizens coming unto his aid,—that his body after its toil might not relax in sloth, he turned to repair the church of Saint Peter, at some distance from the city, by reason of the especial devotion that in the purity of his candid faith he had for the Prince of the Apostles.

8. When this church too was at length finished, he came unto the place that is called The Little Portion, wherein a church had been reared in days of old in honour of the most Blessed Virgin, Mother of God, but which was then deserted and

St. Mary of the Little Portion

cared for by none. When the man of God beheld it thus abandoned, by reason of the ardent devotion that he had toward the Sovereign Lady of the world, he took up his abode there, that he might diligently labour to repair it. Perceiving that Angels ofttimes visited it,—according unto the name of that church, that from old time was called Saint Mary of the Angels,—he abode there by reason of his reverence for the Angels, and his especial love for the Mother of Christ. This place the holy man loved before all other places in the world; for here he began in humility, here he made progress in virtue, here he ended in happiness, and, dying, commended it unto the Brethren as a place most beloved of the Virgin. Concerning this place a certain devout Brother, before his conversion, beheld a vision right worthy to be recounted. He beheld a countless host of men stricken with blindness, with their faces uplifted unto heaven, on bended knees, encircling this church, and they all, stretching out their hands on high, cried unto God with tears, beseeching His mercy and light. And lo, there came a great radiance from heaven, illumining all, and this gave light unto each one of them, and granted the longed-for salvation. This is the place wherein the Order of Brothers Minor was begun by Saint Francis according unto the impulse of the divine revelation. For at the bidding of the divine providence, by the which the servant of Christ was guided in all things, he built three material churches before that, instituting the Order, he preached the Gospel; thus not only did he make progress in ordered course from things perceived

The Church renewed

by the senses unto things perceived by the understanding, and from lesser things unto greater, but he did also prefigure in mystic wise by his material labours the work that should be wrought thereafter. For, like the thrice-repeated repairing of the material fabric, the Church, under the guidance of the holy man, was to be renewed in threefold wise, according unto the pattern given by him, and the Rule, and teaching of Christ; and a triple army of such as should be saved was to be triumphant, even as we now perceive to be fulfilled.

CHAPTER III

OF THE FOUNDING OF HIS RELIGION, AND SANCTION OF THE RULE

The Gospel pattern

1. Now Francis, the servant of God, abiding at the church of the Virgin Mother of God, with continuous sighing besought her that had conceived the Word full of grace and truth that she would deign to become his advocate; and, by the merits of the Mother of Mercy, he did himself conceive and give birth unto the spirit of Gospel truth. For while on a day he was devoutly hearing the Mass of the Apostles, that Gospel was read aloud wherein Christ gave unto His disciples that were sent forth to preach the Gospel pattern for their life, to wit, that they should possess neither gold, nor silver, nor money in their purses, nor scrip for their journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves. Hearing this, and understanding it, and committing it unto memory, the lover of Apostolic poverty was at once filled with joy unspeakable. "This," saith he, "is what I desire, yea, this is what I long for with my whole heart." Forthwith he loosed his shoes from off his feet, laid down his staff, cast aside his purse and his money, contented him with one scanty tunic, and, throwing aside his belt, took a rope for girdle, applying all the care of his heart to discover how best he might fulfil that which he

By his life and teaching

had heard, and conform himself in all things unto the rule of Apostolic godliness.

2. From this time forward, the man of God began, by divine impulse, to become a jealous imitator of Gospel poverty and to invite others unto penitence. His words were not empty, nor meet for laughter, but full of the might of the Holy Spirit, penetrating the heart's core, and smiting all that heard them with mighty amaze. In all his preaching, he would bring tidings of peace, saying: "The Lord give you peace," and thus he would greet the folk at the beginning of his discourses. This greeting he had learnt by revelation from the Lord, even as he himself did afterward testify. Whence it befell, according unto the prophet's words, that he—himself inspired by the spirit of the prophets—brought tidings of peace, and preached salvation, and by salutary admonitions allied many unto the true peace who aforetime were at enmity with Christ, far from salvation.

3. Accordingly, as many remarked in the man of God alike the truth of his simple teaching and of his life, certain of them began by his ensample to turn their thoughts unto penitence, and, renouncing all, to join themselves unto him in habit and life. The first of these was that honour-worthy man, Bernard, who, being made a partaker in the divine calling, earned the title of the firstborn son of the blessed Father, both by being first in time, and by being of an especial holiness. For he, having proved the saintliness of the servant of Christ, was minded after his ensample to utterly despise the world, and sought counsel from him

how he might accomplish this. Hearing this, the servant of God was filled with consolation by reason of his first offspring conceived of the Holy Spirit. "From God," saith he, "behoveth us seek this counsel." Forthwith, when it was morning, they entered into the church of Saint Nicholas, and, having first prayed, Francis, the worshipper of the Trinity, did thrice open the book of the Gospels, seeking by a threefold witness from God to strengthen the holy purpose of Bernard. In the first opening of the book was discovered that saying: "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor." In the second: "Take nothing for your journey." And in the third: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." "This," saith the holy man, "is our life and Rule, and that of all that shall be minded to join our fellowship. Do thou go, then, if thou wilt be perfect, and fulfil that which thou hast heard."

he winneth companions

4. Not long after, five men were called by the same Spirit, and thus the sons of Francis numbered six; the third place among them fell unto the holy Father Giles, a man verily filled with God and worthy to be famed in remembrance. For he became afterward noted for the practice of lofty virtues, even as the servant of the Lord had foretold concerning him, and, albeit he was ignorant and simple, he was exalted unto the peak of sublime contemplation. For while for a long space of time he was continuously absorbed in uplifting of the heart unto God, he was so often snatched up unto Him in ecstasies,—even as I

Vision of Silvester

myself beheld with the witness of mine own eyes, —as that he might be deemed to live among men an angelic rather than a mortal life.

5. Moreover, about that same time, a certain priest of the city of Assisi, Silvester by name, a man of honourable life, received of the Lord a vision not to be passed over in silence. For since, in his finite judgement, he had looked askance at the manner of life of Francis and his Brethren, he was visited,—lest he should be imperilled by his rash verdict,—by the regard of the heavenly grace. For in a dream he beheld the whole city of Assisi beset by a great dragon, whose huge bulk seemed to threaten all the countryside with destruction. Then he saw a Cross of gold proceeding out of the mouth of Francis, the top whereof touched heaven, and its arms outstretched at the side seemed to reach unto the ends of the world, and at its glittering aspect that foul and loathly dragon was utterly put to flight. When this had been thrice shewn unto him, he deemed it a divine portent, and related it in order unto the man of God and his Brethren; and no long time thereafter he left the world, and clave so constantly unto the footsteps of Christ as that his life in the Order rendered true the vision that he had received while yet in the world.

6. When this vision was related unto him, the man of God was not puffed up with the glorying of men, but, recognising the goodness of God in the favours shewn unto him, he was the more keenly incited to repel the craft of the ancient enemy, and to preach the glory of the Cross of Christ. Now on a day, while in a certain lonely

place he was bitterly bewailing the remembrance of past years, the joy of the Holy Spirit came upon him, and he was assured of the full remission of all his offences. Then, carried out of himself, and wholly wrapt into a marvellous light, the horizons of his mind were enlarged, and he clearly beheld the future story of himself and of his sons. Returning after this unto the Brethren, "Be consoled," saith he, "my dearest, and rejoice in the Lord, and be not sad for that ye be few in number, nor let my simpleness nor your own make you afeared, for the Lord hath verily shewn me that God will cause us to wax into a great host, and will enlarge us in manifold wise with the grace of His blessing."

The Brethren sent forth to preach

7. Whereas about this time another good man did enter the Religion, the blessed family of the man of God reached the number of seven. Then the holy Father called all his sons unto him and told them many things concerning the Kingdom of God, the contempt of the world, the sacrifice of their own wills and the chastisement of the body, and did lay before them his intent of sending them forth into the four quarters of the world. For now the barren and poor humble simpleness of the holy Father had brought forth seven sons and he was fain to give birth unto the whole company of the faithful in the Lord Christ, calling them unto the mourning of penitence. "Go ye," saith the sweet Father unto his sons, "bringing tidings of peace unto men, and preach repentance for the remission of sins. Be ye patient in tribulation, watchful unto prayer, zealous in toil, humble in speech, sober in manner, and thankful

Their joyous return

for kindnesses, seeing that for all these an everlasting kingdom is prepared for you." Then they, humbly prostrating themselves on the ground before the servant of God, received with gladness of spirit the behest of holy obedience. And Francis said unto each one singly: "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee." He was wont to say these words whensoever he was guiding any Brother unto obedience. Then he himself, knowing that he was set as an ensample unto the rest, that he might first do that which he had taught, set forth with one companion toward one quarter of the world, the remaining six being apportioned, after the fashion of a Cross, unto the other three parts. After some little time had passed, the kindly Father, longing for the presence of his beloved family,—since he could not of himself call them together into one place,—prayed that this might be accomplished by Him Who gathereth together the outcasts of Israel. And this came to pass. For, with no mortal summoning, and all unexpectedly, within a short time all came together according as he had desired, by the effectual working of the divine goodness, and to their no small marvel. Moreover, as four other honourable men joined them about that time, their number increased unto twelve.

8. Now when the servant of Christ perceived that the number of the Brethren was gradually increasing, he wrote for himself and for his Brethren a Rule for their life, in simple words. Herein the observance of the Holy Gospel was set as the inseparable foundation, and some few other points were added that seemed necessary for a consistent

Saint Francis seeketh the Pope

manner of life. But he was fain that what he had written should be approved by the Supreme Pontiff, wherefore he purposed to approach the Apostolic See with that his company of simple men, relying only on the divine guidance. God from on high had regard unto his desire, and fortified the minds of his companions, that were afeared at the thought of his simpleness, by a vision shewn unto the man of God after this wise. It seemed unto him that he was walking along a certain road, near by which stood a very lofty tree. When he had drawn nigh unto it, and was standing beneath it, wondering at its height, on a sudden he was so raised on high by the divine might as that he touched the top of the tree, and bent down its highest branches unto its roots right easily. The portent of this vision Francis, filled with the Spirit of God, understood to refer unto the stooping of the Apostolic See unto his desire; wherefore he was gladdened in spirit, and his Brethren were strengthened in the Lord, and thus he set forth with them on the journey.

9. Now when he had come unto the Roman Curia,* and had been introduced into the presence of the Supreme Pontiff, he expounded unto him his intent, humbly and earnestly beseeching him to sanction the Rule aforesaid for their life. And the Vicar of Christ, the lord Innocent the Third, a man exceeding renowned for wisdom, behold-

* A paragraph inserted here in some editions, relating how the Pope at first repulsed Francis, but was converted by a vision, is not from Bonaventura's pen, but from that of the Minister-General who succeeded him (*vide* Quaracchi text, p. 29, note).

His request

ing in the man of God the wondrous purity of a simple soul, constancy unto his purpose, and the enkindled fervour of a holy will, was disposed to give unto the suppliant his fatherly sanction. Howbeit, he delayed to perform that which the little poor one of Christ asked, by reason that unto some of the Cardinals this seemed a thing untried, and too hard for human strength. But there was present among the Cardinals an honour-worthy man, the lord John of Saint Paul, Bishop of Sabina, a lover of all holiness, and an helper of the poor men of Christ. He, inflamed by the Divine Spirit, said unto the Supreme Pontiff, and unto his colleagues: "If we refuse the request of this poor man as a thing too hard, and untried, when his petition is that the pattern of Gospel life may be sanctioned for him, let us beware lest we stumble at the Gospel of Christ. For if any man saith that in the observance of Gospel perfection, and the vowing thereof, there is contained aught that is untried, or contrary unto reason, or impossible to observe, he is clearly seen to blaspheme against Christ, the author of the Gospel." When these arguments had been set forth, the successor of the Apostle Peter, turning unto the poor man of Christ, said: "Pray unto Christ, my son, that He may shew us His will through thee, and when we know it more surely, we will more confidently assent unto thy holy desires."

10. Then the servant of God Almighty, betaking himself wholly unto prayer, gained by devout intercession that which he might set forth outwardly, and the Pope feel inwardly. For when he had narrated a parable of a rich King

Parable of the poor woman

that had of free will espoused a fair woman that was poor, and how the children she bare shewed the likeness of the King that begat them, and so were brought up at his table, even as he had learnt this of the Lord,—he added, as an interpretation thereof: "It is not to be feared that the sons and heirs of the everlasting King will perish of hunger, even they that have been born of a poor mother in the likeness of the King, Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, and that shall themselves beget sons through the spirit of Poverty in a little poor Religion. For if the King of heaven hath promised an everlasting kingdom unto them that follow Him, how much more shall He provide for them those things that He bestoweth alike on the good and on the evil?" When the Vicar of Christ had diligently hearkened unto this parable, and the interpretation thereof, he marvelled greatly, and perceived that Christ had of a truth spoken through a man. Moreover, he maintained, by the inspiration of the Divine Spirit, that a vision that at that time was shewn unto him from heaven would be fulfilled in Francis. For in a dream he saw, as he recounted, the Lateran Basilica about to fall, when a little poor man, of mean stature and humble aspect, propped it with his own back, and thus saved it from falling. "Verily," saith he, "he it is that by his work and teaching shall sustain the Church of Christ." From this vision, he was filled with an especial devotion unto him, and in all ways disposed himself unto his supplication, and ever loved the servant of Christ with an especial affection. Then and there he granted his request, and promised at a later day to bestow

The Rule approved

yet more upon him. He sanctioned the Rule, and gave him a command to preach repentance, and made all the lay Brethren that had accompanied the servant of God wear narrow tonsures, that they might preach the word of God without hindrance.

CHAPTER IV

OF THE ADVANCEMENT OF THE ORDER UNDER HIS HAND, AND OF THE CONFIRMATION OF THE RULE ALREADY SANCTIONED

A miracle by the way

1. THENCEFORWARD Francis, relying on the favour of heaven and on the Papal authority, took his way with all confidence toward the valley of Spoleto, that he might both live and teach the Gospel of Christ. While he was holding converse with his companions on the road, as to how they might observe in sincerity the Rule that they had professed, and how in all holiness and righteousness they might walk before God, how they might progress among themselves, and be an ensample unto others,—their discussion was prolonged, and the hours slipped by. And at last they found themselves, wearied with the length of their toilsome way, and an hungered, in a certain lonely place. Then verily, when there was no means whereby they might provide them with the needful food, the providence of God came speedily unto their aid. For, on a sudden, there appeared a man carrying bread in his hand, the which he gave unto the little poor ones of Christ, and, also on a sudden, vanished, without any man knowing whence he came or whither he went. Hereby the Brethren in their poverty perceived that the guardian care of heaven was

Return to Assisi

about the company of the man of God, and were refreshed more by the gift of the divine bounty than by the food of the body; moreover, they were filled with heavenly comfort, and firmly resolved, and strengthened themselves in the irrevocable determination, never to retreat from their vow of holy poverty for any goad of necessity or affliction.

2. Thus they returned in their holy intent unto the valley of Spoleto, and began to discuss whether they ought to live among men, or to betake them unto lonely places. But Francis, the servant of Christ, trusting not in his own efforts or those of his Brethren, with importunate prayer enquired the pleasure of the divine will concerning this. Then he was illumined by a divinely revealed oracle, and understood that he had been sent of the Lord unto this end, that he might win for Christ the souls that the devil was striving to carry off. Wherefore he chose to live rather for all men than for his single self, inspired by the ensample of Him Who brooked to die, One Man for all.

3. Accordingly, the man of God returned with the rest of his companions unto a certain deserted hut nigh the city of Assisi, wherein, after the pattern of Holy Poverty, they lived in much toil and necessity, seeking to be refreshed rather with the bread of tears than of luxury. For they gave themselves up continuously unto divine prayers, being earnest in the practice of devout intercession—of the heart rather than of the lips—for they had not yet any ecclesiastical books wherein they might chant the Canonical

Hours. Howbeit, in the place of such, they meditated day and night on the book of the Cross of Christ, continuously looking thereupon, by the ensample of their Father, and taught by his discourse, for he continually spake unto them concerning the Cross of Christ. When the Brethren besought him to teach them to pray, he said: "When ye pray, say 'Our Father,' and: 'We adore Thee, O Christ, in all Thy churches that be in the whole world, and we bless Thee for that by Thy holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world." Moreover, he taught them to praise God in all things and through all His creatures, to reverence priests with an especial honour, to firmly hold and simply confess the true faith, according as the Holy Roman Church doth both hold and teach it. The Brethren observed the instructions of the holy Father in all things, and, using the form of prayer that he had given unto them, would humbly prostrate themselves before all churches and crosses that they beheld, were it even from a distance.

Prayer and praise

4. Now while the Brethren were abiding in the place aforesaid, the holy man one Saturday entered the city of Assisi, to preach early on the Sunday, as was his wont, in the Cathedral Church. While the man devoted unto God was passing the night, after his wonted manner, in a hut within the Canons' garden, praying unto God, and absent in the body from his sons,—lo, about midnight, while some of the Brethren were taking rest, others keeping vigil in prayer, a chariot of fire of marvellous brightness, entering by the door of the house, turned thrice hither

The chariot of fire

and thither through the dwelling, and over the chariot a shining ball of fire rested, in appearance like unto the sun, making the night radiant. The watchful Brethren were astounded, they that slept were awakened and alarmed at the same moment, and felt the light no less in their hearts than with their bodies, while by the power of that marvellous brightness the conscience of each was laid bare unto his fellow. For they all understood alike,—all seeing in turn the hearts of each,—that their holy Father was absent from them in body, but present in spirit, and that, transformed into such a likeness, illumined with heavenly rays, and flaming with ardent heat, he was shewn unto them of the Lord with supernatural might in a shining chariot of fire; so that they, as Israelites indeed, might follow after him who, like another Elias, had been made by God the chariot and the horseman of spiritual men. We must verily believe that He opened the eyes of those simple men at the prayers of Francis, that they might see the mighty deeds of God, Who aforetime opened the eyes of the young man that he might see the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha. When the holy man returned unto the Brethren, he began to scrutinise the secret things of their consciences, to console them with that marvellous vision, and to foretell many things that should come to pass concerning the progress of the Order. And as he revealed many things surpassing mortal sense, the Brethren perceived of a truth that the Spirit of the Lord had rested upon His servant Francis in such fulness as that they would walk most securely in following his teaching and life.

Increase of the Order

5. After this, Francis, shepherd of a little flock, led his band of twelve Brethren unto Saint Mary of the Little Portion,—the favour of heaven going before him,— that in the place wherein, by the merits of the Mother of God, the Order of Minors had taken its beginning, it might by her aid gain an increase. There too he became an herald of the Gospel, going round among cities and fortified places, proclaiming the Kingdom of God, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth. He seemed unto them that beheld him a man of another world, one, to wit, that had his heart ever set on heaven, and his face turned toward it, and that endeavoured to draw all men upwards. From this time, the vine of Christ began to bring forth pleasant savour of the Lord, and the flowers produced therefrom became the rich fruit of sweetness, honour, and righteousness.

6. For, enkindled by the fervour of his preaching, very many folk bound themselves by new rules of penitence, after the pattern received from the man of God, and that same servant of Christ ordained that their manner of living should be called the Order of the Brethren of Penitence. Of a truth, even as the way of penitence is known to be common unto all that strive after heaven, so it is noted of how much worth in the sight of God was this Order, embracing clerks and laymen, virgins, and married folk of either sex, by the many miracles wrought by some of its members. And there were maidens converted unto lifelong virginity, among whom that virgin dearest unto God, Clare, the first plant among them, like a

Clare snowy spring blossom breathed fragrance, and shone like a star exceeding bright. She is now glorified in heaven, and rightly honoured by the Church on earth, she that was the daughter in Christ of the holy Father Francis, the little poor one, and herself the Mother of the Poor Ladies.

7. Now many were not only smitten with devotion, but also kindled by yearning after the perfection of Christ, and, despising all the vanity of worldly things, followed in the footsteps of Francis; and these, increasing by daily additions, speedily reached unto the ends of the earth. For holy Poverty, whom alone they took with them for their charges, made them swift unto all obedience, strong to labour, and speedy in journeying. And since they possessed no earthly things they set their affections on naught, and had naught that they feared to lose; they were everywhere at ease, weighed down by no fear, harassed by no care; they lived like men who were removed from vexations of the mind, and, taking no thought for it, awaited the morrow, and their night's lodging. Many reproaches were hurled upon them in divers regions of the world, as on men contemptible and unknown; howbeit, their love for the Gospel of Christ rendered them so longsuffering as that they sought rather to be in places where they would endure persecution in the body, than in those where their saintliness was recognised, and where they might be puffed up by the applause of the world. Their very destitution of possessions seemed unto them overflowing wealth, while, according unto the counsel of the Wise King, they were better pleased with little than with much.

A Saracen honoureth their poverty

On a time when some of the Brethren had come unto the regions of the infidels, it chanced that a certain Saracen, moved by kindly feeling, offered them money for their needful food. And when they refused to take it, the man marvelled, perceiving that they were penniless. But when at last he understood that they had become poor for the love of God and were resolved not to own money, he associated himself with them in such affection as that he offered to supply all their needs, so long as he should have aught in his possession. O priceless value of poverty, by whose marvellous power the mind of a fierce barbarian was changed into such compassionate gentleness! How appalling and scandalous a crime it is, that any Christian should trample on this rare pearl, that a Saracen exalted with such honour!

8. About that time, a certain Religious of the Order of Crossbearers, Morico by name, was lying in an hospital hard by Assisi suffering from an infirmity so serious and so protracted as that he was given up unto death by the physicians; he became a suppliant of the man of God, beseeching him earnestly through a messenger that he would deign to intercede with the Lord on his behalf. The blessed Father graciously acceded thereunto, and, having first prayed, took some crumbs of bread, and mixed with them some oil taken from the lamp that burned before the altar of the Virgin, and sent it by the hand of the Brethren unto the sick man, as though it were an electuary, saying: "Carry this medicament unto our brother Morico, by the which the power of Christ shall not only restore him unto full health, but shall also render

A sick man healed

him an hardy warrior, who shall cleave with c stancy unto our ranks." Forthwith, so soon the sick man tasted of that remedy made by spiration of the Holy Spirit, he rose up heal and gained from God such strength of mind a body as that shortly thereafter he entered t Religion of the holy man, and, clothing himse with one tunic alone—beneath the which he wor for a long space of time a shirt of mail—and satisfied with but uncooked fare,—herbs to wit, and vegetables and fruits,—he thus for many years tasted neither bread nor wine, and yet remained strong and sound.

9. As the merits of the virtues of these little ones of Christ waxed greater, the fragrance of their good repute was spread on all sides, and drew much folk from divers parts of the world to see the holy Father in person. Among whom was a certain skilled composer of secular songs, who by reason of this gift had been crowned by the Emperor, and thence called "King of Verse," and he now was minded to seek the man of God, the despiser of worldly things. And when he had found him preaching in a Monastery at Borgo San Severino, the hand of the Lord was upon him, and he beheld that same preacher of the Cross of Christ, Francis, marked after the likeness of a Cross with two exceeding shining swords set crosswise, whereof the one reached from his head unto his feet, the other across his breast from hand to hand. He had not known the servant of Christ by face, but speedily recognised him when signalled out by so great a portent. Forthwith, all astonied at this sight, he began to resolve on

better things, and, at length, pricked by the power of his words, and pierced as though by the sword of the Spirit proceeding out of his mouth, he did utterly despise worldly glories, and clave unto the blessed Father, professing his vows. Wherefore the holy man, seeing that he had utterly turned from the disquiet of the world unto the peace of Christ, called him Brother Pacifico. He afterward made progress in all holiness, and, before that he became Minister in France,—being the first who held the office of Minister there,—he merited to behold once more a great T on the forehead of Francis, the which, marked out by a diversity of colours, adorned his face with its marvellous beauty. This sign, in sooth, the holy man revered with deep affection, praised it often in his discourse, and, in the letters that he dictated, signed it with his own hand at the end, as though all his care was, in the prophet's words, to set a mark * upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry, and that be truly converted unto Christ Jesus.

Brother Pacifico

10. Now as time went by, and the Brethren were multiplied, their watchful shepherd began to call them together unto Chapters General in the place of Saint Mary of the Little Portion, so that, God dividing them an inheritance by line in the land of poverty, he might allot unto each his portion of obedience. Here, albeit there was destitution of all things needful, a company of more than 5,000 Brethren came together at one time, and, the divine mercy succouring them, there

* Vulg. Ezek. ix. 4. Signa thau (T) super frontes, etc., the letter T being in form like a Cross.

The Chapter at Arles

was both a sufficiency of victual, and bodily health together with it, while gladness of spirit abounded. In the provincial Chapters, albeit Francis could not there shew himself present in the body, yet in spirit—by his zealous care for their ruling, by his urgency in prayer, and the efficacy of his blessing—he was present there; yea, and once, by the operation of God's marvellous power, he did visibly appear. For while that glorious preacher, who is now a noted Confessor of Christ, Antony, was preaching unto the Chapter of the Brethren at Arles on the title inscribed on the Cross: "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews," a certain Brother of proved uprightness, Monaldo by name, looking, by a divine impulse, toward the door of the Chapter-house, beheld with his bodily eyes the Blessed Francis uplifted in the air, his hands outstretched after the manner of a Cross, blessing the Brethren. All the Brethren felt that they had been filled with a consolation of spirit so great and so new as that the Spirit bore indubitable witness within them of the true presence of the holy Father, albeit this was further assured, not alone by manifest tokens, but also by external testimony through the words of that same holy Father. We must verily believe that the almighty power of God,—that vouchsafed unto the holy Bishop Ambrose to be present at the burial of the glorious Martin, that he might honour the holy Pontiff with his holy ministry,—did also make His servant Francis to appear at the preaching of His true herald Antony, that he might sanction his preaching of the truth, and in especial his preaching of the

Cross of Christ, whereof he was a supporter and servant.

The Rule drawn up anew

11. Now as the Order was spreading abroad, Francis was minded to make the Rule of their life, that the lord Innocent had sanctioned, be confirmed in perpetuity by his successor Honorius, and he was admonished by a revelation from God on this wise. He seemed unto himself to have gathered from the ground some very small crumbs of bread, and to have to part them among many famished Brethren that stood round about him. While he hesitated, fearing to part among them such minute crumbs, lest haply they might slip between his hands, a Voice from above said unto him: "Francis, make one Host out of all the crumbs, and give it unto these that would fain eat." This he did, and such as did not receive it devoutly, or despised the gift as they received it, were speedily stricken with leprosy, and so marked out from the rest. At morn, the holy man narrated all these things unto his companions, grieving that he could not interpret the mystic meaning of the vision. But on the day following, as he kept prayerful vigil, he heard a Voice speaking unto him from heaven on this wise: "Francis, the crumbs of the night past are the words of the Gospel, the Host is the Rule, the leprosy is sin." Being fain, therefore, to reduce unto more convenient form the Rule that was to be confirmed,—it having been somewhat diffusely compiled by putting together the words of the Gospel,—and being directed thereunto by the vision that had been shewn him, he went up into a certain mountain with two com-

by divine revelation

panions, the Holy Spirit leading him. There, fasting, or living on bread and water alone, he made the Rule be compiled, according unto what the divine Spirit had taught him in prayer. When he came down from the mountain, he entrusted this Rule unto the keeping of his Vicar, who, when a few days had gone by, affirmed that he had lost it through negligence. Then the holy man returned unto the lonely place, and there drew up the Rule again, like the former one, as though he had received the very words from the mouth of God; and he obtained its confirmation, as he had desired, from the lord Pope Honorius aforesaid, in the eighth year of his pontificate. When persuading the Brethren with ardour to observe this Rule, he would say that he had set naught therein of his own devising, but that he had made all things be written according as they had been divinely revealed unto him. And that this might be more assuredly confirmed by the witness of God, it was but a few days thereafter that the stigmata of the Lord Jesus were imprinted upon him by the finger of the Living God,—the seal, as it were, of the Chief Pontiff, Christ, to sanction in all ways the Rule, and to approve its author, even as is described in its own place below, after the recital of his virtues.

CHAPTER V

OF THE AUSTERITY OF HIS LIFE, AND OF HOW ALL CREATED THINGS AFFORDED HIM COMFORT

1. When therefore the man of God, Francis, perceived that by his ensample many were incited to bear the Cross of Christ with fervour of soul, he himself was incited, like a good leader of the army of Christ, to reach unto the palm of victory by the heights of unconquered valour. For, considering that saying of the Apostle: "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts," and being fain to wear the armour of the Cross upon his body, he restrained his sensual appetites with such strict discipline as that he would barely take what was necessary to support life. For he was wont to say that it was difficult to satisfy the needs of the body without yielding unto the inclinations of the senses. Wherefore he would hardly, and but seldom, allow himself cooked food when in health, and, when he did allow it, he would either sprinkle it with ashes, or by pouring water thereupon would as far as possible destroy its savour and taste. Of his drinking of wine what shall I say, when even of water he would scarce drink what he needed, while parched with burning thirst? He was alway discovering methods of more rigorous abstinence, and would daily make progress in their

His abstinence

and bodily mortification

use, and albeit he had already attained the summit of perfection, yet, like a novice, he was ever making trial of some new method, chastising the lusts of the flesh by afflicting it. Howbeit, when he went forth abroad, he adapted himself,—as the Gospel biddeth,—unto them that entertained him, in the quality of their meats, yet only so as that, on his return unto his own abode, he strictly observed the sparing frugality of abstinence. In this wise he shewed himself harsh toward his own self, gracious toward his neighbour, and in all things subject unto the Gospel of Christ, and did thus set an ensample of edification, not alone by his abstinence, but even in what he ate. The bare ground for the most part served as a couch unto his wearied body, and he would often sleep sitting, with a log or a stone placed under his head, and, clad in one poor tunic, he served the Lord in cold and nakedness.

2. Once when he was asked how in such scant clothing he could protect him from the bitterness of the winter's cold, he made answer in fervour of spirit: "If through our yearning for the heavenly fatherland we have been inwardly kindled by its flame, we can easily endure this bodily cold." He abhorred softness in clothing, and loved harshness, declaring that for this John the Baptist had been praised by the Divine lips. In sooth, if ever he perceived smoothness in a tunic that was given him, he had it lined with small cords, for he would say that, according unto the Word of Truth, it was not in poor men's huts, but in Kings' houses, that softness of raiment was to be sought. And he had learnt by sure experience

that the devils be afeared of hardness, but that by luxury and softness they be the more keenly incited to tempt men.

Tempted of the devil,

Accordingly, one night when by reason of an infirmity in his head and eyes he had, contrary unto his wont, a pillow of feathers placed beneath his head, the devil entered thereinto, and vexed him until the morning hour, distracting him in divers ways from his exercise of holy prayer; until, calling his companion, he made the pillow and the devil withal be carried afar from the cell. But as the Brother was leaving the cell, carrying the pillow, he lost the power and use of all his limbs, until, at the voice of the holy Father, who perceived this in spirit, his former powers of mind and body were fully restored unto him.

3. Stern in discipline, Francis stood continually upon the watch-tower, having especial care unto that purity that should be maintained in both the inner and the outer man. Wherefore, in the early days of his conversion, he was wont in the winter season to plunge into a ditch full of snow, that he might both utterly subdue the foe within him, and might preserve his white robe of chastity from the fire of lust. He would maintain that it was beyond compare more tolerable for a spiritual man to bear intense cold in his body, than to feel the heat of carnal lust, were it but a little, in his mind.

4. When he was at the hermitage of Sartiano, and had one night devoted himself unto prayer in his cell, the ancient enemy called him, saying thrice: "Francis, Francis, Francis." When he had enquired of him what he sought, that other made reply to deceive him: "There is no sinner

routeth him

in the world whom God would not spare, should he turn unto Him. But whoso killeth himself by harsh penance, shall find no mercy throughout eternity." Forthwith the man of God perceived by revelation the deceits of the enemy, and how he had striven to render him once more lukewarm. And this the following event proved. For but a little after this, at the instigation of him whose breath kindleth coals, a grievous temptation of the flesh laid hold on him. When the lover of chastity felt its oncoming, he laid aside his habit, and began to scourge himself severely with a cord, saying: "Ah, brother ass, thus must thou be led, thus must thou submit unto the lash. The habit is the servant of Religion, it is a token of holiness, the sensual man may not steal it; if thou art fain to go forth anywhither, go!" Then, impelled by a marvellous fervour of spirit, he threw open the door of his cell, and went out into the garden, where, plunging his now naked body into a great snow-heap, he began to pile up therefrom with full hands seven mounds, the which he set before him, and thus addressed his outer man: "Behold, (saith he), this larger heap is thy wife, these four be two sons and two daughters, the other twain be a serving man and maid, that thou must needs have to serve thee. Now bestir thee and clothe them, for they be perishing with cold. But if manifold cares on their behalf trouble thee, do thou be careful to serve the one Lord." Then the tempter departed, routed, and the holy man returned unto his cell victorious, in that, by enduring the external cold in right penitent fashion, he had so extinguished the fire of lust within that

thereafter he felt it no whit. Now a Brother, who at the time was devoting himself unto prayer, beheld all these things by the light of a clear shining moon. When the man of God discovered that he had seen these things on that night, he revealed unto him how that temptation had befallen him, and bade him tell no man, so long as he himself lived, the thing that he had seen.

Temptations of the senses

5. And not only did he teach that the appetites of the body must be mortified, and its impulses bridled, but also that the outer senses, through the which death entereth into the soul, must be guarded with the utmost watchfulness. He bade that intimate intercourse with women, holding converse with them, and looking upon them—the which be unto many an occasion of falling—should be zealously shunned, declaring that by such things a weak spirit is broken, and a strong one ofttimes weakened. He said that one who held converse with women—unless he were of an especial uprightness—could as little avoid contamination therefrom as he could, in the words of Scripture, go upon hot coals and his feet not be burned. He himself so turned away his eyes that they might not behold vanity after this sort that he knew the features of scarce any woman,—thus he once told a companion. For he thought it was not safe to dwell on the appearance of their persons, that might either rekindle a spark of the vanquished flesh, or spot the radiance of a chaste mind. For he maintained that converse with women was a vain toy, except only for confession or the briefest instruction, such as made for salvation, and was in accord with decorum. "What

to be dealings," saith he, "should a Religious have with
unned, a woman, except when she seeketh, with devout
d sloth supplication, after holy penitence, or counsel anent a better life? In overweening confidence, the enemy is less dreaded, and the devil, if so be that he can have a hair of his own in a man, soon maketh it wax into a beam."

6. He taught the Brothers zealously to shun sloth, as the sink of all evil thoughts, shewing by his ensample that the rebellious and idle body must be subdued by unceasing discipline and profitable toil. Wherefore he would call his body "brother ass," as though it were meet to be loaded with toilsome burdens, beaten with many stripes, and nourished on mean fare. If he beheld any man wandering about in idleness, and fain to feed on the toil of others, he thought he ought to be called "brother fly," for that, doing no good himself, and spoiling the good done by others, he made himself an hateful pest unto all. Wherefore he ofttimes said: "I would that my Brethren should labour and employ themselves, lest, being given up unto sloth, they should stray into sins of heart or tongue." He was minded that a Gospel silence should be observed by the Brethren, such as, to wit, that they should at all times diligently refrain from every idle word, as those that shall give account thereof in the Day of Judgement. But if he found any Brother prone unto vain words, he would sharply chide him, declaring a shamefast sparingness of speech to be the guard of a pure heart, and no small virtue, seeing that death and life are in the power of the tongue, not so much with regard unto taste as with regard unto speech.

His compassionate dealing

7. But albeit he sought with all his might to lead the Brethren unto the austere life, yet the utmost rigour of severity pleased him not,—such rigour as hath no bowels of compassion, nor is flavoured with the salt of discretion. Thus, on a certain night, when one of the Brethren by reason of his excessive abstinence was so tormented by hunger that he could take no repose, the kindly shepherd, perceiving the danger that threatened his sheep, called the Brother, set bread before him, and, that he might remove any cause for his confusion of face, began first to eat himself, then gently bade him partake. The Brother, laying aside his shamefastness, took the food, rejoicing exceedingly that, through the wise kindliness of his shepherd, he had both escaped that bodily peril, and had received no small ensample of edification withal. When morning came, and the Brethren had been called together, the man of God related that which had befallen in the night, adding the sage exhortation: "Be the act of love, not the food, an ensample unto you, my Brethren." Moreover, he taught them to follow discretion, as the charioteer of the virtues,—not that discretion unto which the flesh persuadeth, but that which Christ taught, Whose most holy life is acknowledged to be the express image of perfection.

8. And since it is not possible for a man beset with the infirmity of the flesh so perfectly to follow the Crucified Lamb without spot as to escape contracting some defilement, by his own firm ensample he made declaration that they who keep watch over the perfection of their life ought to cleanse themselves daily with floods of tears.

is tears of penitence

For, albeit he had already attained a wondrous purity of heart and body, yet would he not abstain from continual floods of tears whereby to cleanse the mental vision, not weighing the detriment unto his bodily sight. For when by incessant weeping he had sustained a very grievous injury unto the eyes, and the physician would fain have persuaded him to refrain from tears, if he wished to escape blindness of his bodily sight, the holy man made answer: "It is not meet, brother physician, that for the love of that light that we have in common with the flies, the visitation of the eternal light should be impaired, be it but by little. For the spirit did not receive the blessing of light for the sake of the flesh, but the flesh for the sake of the spirit." He preferred rather to lose the light of his bodily vision than, by thwarting the devotion of the spirit, to check the tears whereby the inner eye is cleansed, that it may avail to see God.

9. Now on a time when he was counselled by the physicians, and urgently importuned by the Brethren, to permit himself to be succoured by the remedy of a cautery, the man of God did humbly assent thereunto, forasmuch as he perceived it to be alike salutary and arduous. The surgeon, then, was summoned, and, having come, laid his iron instrument in the fire to prepare for the cautery. Then the servant of Christ,—consoling his body that at the sight shuddered in fear,—began to address the fire as a friend, saying: "My brother fire, the Most High hath created thee beyond all other creatures mighty in thine enviable glory, fair, and useful. Be thou clement unto me in this hour, and courteous. I beseech the great

Lord, Who created thee, that He temper thy heat unto me, so that I may be able to bear thy gentle burning." His prayer ended, he made the sign of the Cross over the iron instrument, that was glowing at white heat from the fire, and then waited fearlessly. The hissing iron was impressed on the tender flesh, and the cautery drawn from the ear unto the eyebrow. How much suffering the fire caused him, the holy man himself told: "Praise the Most High," saith he unto the Brethren, "for that of a truth I say unto you, I felt neither the heat of the fire, nor any pain in my flesh." And, turning unto the surgeon, "If," saith he, "the cautery be not well made, impress it again." The surgeon, finding such mighty valour of spirit in his frail body, marvelled, and exalted this divine miracle, saying: "I tell ye, Brethren, I have seen strange things to-day." For, by reason that Francis had attained unto such purity that his flesh was in harmony with his spirit, and his spirit with God, in marvellous agreement, it was ordained by the divine ruling that the creature that serveth its Maker should be wondrously subject unto his will and command.

Fire and water serve him

10. At another time, when the servant of God was afflicted by a very grievous sickness, at the hermitage of Saint Urban, and, feeling his strength failing, had asked for a draught of wine, answer was made him that there was no wine there that could be brought unto him; whereupon he bade that water should be brought, and, when brought, he blessed it, making the sign of the Cross over it. At once that which had been pure water became excellent wine, and that which the poverty of the

Angels solace him

lonely place could not provide was obtained by the purity of the holy man. Tasting thereof, he forthwith so easily recovered his strength as that the new flavour and the renewed health, by the sense of taste and by the miracle renewing him that tasted, attested, with twofold witness, his perfect laying aside of the old man and putting on of the new.

11. Nor did created things alone obey the servant of God at his beck, but everywhere the very providence of the Creator stooped unto his good pleasure. Thus, on a time when his body was weighed down by the suffering of many infirmities together, he had a yearning for some tuneful sound that might incite him unto gladness of spirit, yet discreet decorum would not allow this to be rendered by human agency,—then the Angels gave their services to fulfil the good pleasure of the holy man. For one night while he was wakeful, and meditating on the Lord, on a sudden was heard the sound of a lyre of wondrous harmony and sweetest tune. No one was to be seen, but the coming and going of a lyrist was betokened by the volume of sound, now here, now there. With his mind uplifted unto God, he enjoyed such sweetness from that melodious strain as that he thought him to have exchanged this world for another. This was not hidden from the Brethren that were his close companions, who oftentimes perceived, by assured tokens, that he was visited of the Lord with such exceeding and continual consolations as that he could not utterly hide them.

12. On another time, while the man of God,

with a Brother for companion, was making his way to preach between Lombardy and the March of Treviso, and was nigh the Po, the shadowy darkness of night surprised them. And since their way was beset by many and great dangers by reason of the darkness, the river, and the marshes, his companion said unto the holy man: "Pray, Father, that we be delivered from instant peril." Unto whom the man of God made answer with great confidence: "God is able, if it be His sweet will, to put to flight the thick darkness, and to grant us the blessing of light." Scarce had he ended his speech ere, lo! such a great light began to shine around them with heavenly radiance that, while for others it was dark night, they could see in the clear light not their road only, but many things round about. By the leading of this light they were guided in body and consoled in spirit, until they arrived safely, singing divine hymns and lauds, at their place of lodging that was some long way distant. Consider how wondrous was the purity of this man, how great his merits, that at his beck the fire should temper its heat, water should change its flavour, angelic music should afford him solace, and light from heaven leading; thus it was evident that the whole frame of the world was obedient unto the consecrated senses of the holy man.

Light in darkness

CHAPTER VI

OF HIS HUMILITY AND OBEDIENCE AND OF THE DIVINE CONDESCENSIONS SHEWN UNTO HIM AT WILL

Humility 1. HUMILITY, the guardian and glory of all virtues, abounded in rich fulness in the man of God. In his own estimation, he was naught but a sinner, whereas in very truth he was the mirror and brightness of all saintliness. In humility he strove to build himself up, as a wise masterbuilder laying the foundation that he had learnt of Christ. He would say that for this end the Son of God had come down from the heights, and from His Father's bosom, unto our mean estate, to wit, that both by ensample and precept our Lord and Master might teach humility. Wherefore Francis, as a disciple of Christ, strove ever to make himself of no esteem in his own and other men's eyes, mindful of that saying of the greatest Teacher: "That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." This too he was wont to say, "A man's worth is what he is in the sight of God, and no more." Accordingly, he deemed it a fool's part to be uplifted by the applause of the world, but he rejoiced in railings, and was saddened by praise. He would liefer hear himself reviled than praised, knowing that reviling leadeth unto amendment, while praise im-

A public confession

pelleth toward a fall. Wherefore ofttimes when folk exalted the merits of his saintliness, he would bid one of the Brethren offer him a contrast, by pouring contemptuous words into his ears. And when that Brother, albeit against his will, called him a lout and an hireling, one unskilled and unprofitable, he would rejoice in spirit and in countenance alike, and would make answer: "The Lord bless thee, dearest son, for thou hast spoken words most true, and such as it becometh the son of Peter Bernardone to hear."

2. Now that he might make himself contemned of others, he spared not his shamefastness, but in preaching before the whole folk laid bare his failings. It befell once that, while weighed down by sickness, he had some little relaxed the strictness of his abstinence, with the intent of regaining his health. But when that he had recovered his bodily strength, this true despiser of self was inspired to rebuke his own flesh. "It is not fitting," saith he, "that the folk should believe me to observe abstinence while that I, on the contrary, do refresh my body in secret." Accordingly, he arose, kindled with the spirit of holy humility, and, calling the folk together in an open space of the city of Assisi, he, together with many Brethren that he had brought with him, made a solemn entrance into the Cathedral Church, and then, with a rope tied round his neck, and naked save for his breeches, bade them drag him in the sight of all unto the stone whereupon criminals were wont to be set for punishment. Mounting it, albeit he was suffering from quartan fever and weakness, and the season

He shunneth praise

was bitterly cold, he preached with much power of spirit, and, while all gave ear, declared that he ought not to be honoured as a spiritual man, but that rather he ought to be despised of all as a fleshly glutton. Then they that were present and beheld this amazing sight, marvelled, and, for that they had long known his austerities, were devoutly pricked to the heart, exclaiming that humility after this sort were easier admired than imitated. Yet, albeit this seemed rather like unto the prodigy foretold of the prophet than an ensample, it set forth a pattern of perfect humility, whereby the follower of Christ was taught that he ought to despise the vaunting of a transient praise, and restrain the pomp of swelling pride, and refute the lies of a deceitful semblance.

3. Many things after this sort he ofttimes did, that outwardly he might become as it were a vessel that perisheth, while inwardly he possessed the spirit of sanctification. He sought to hide in the secret places of his heart the favours of his Lord, loth to reveal them and so gain praise, that might be an occasion of falling. Ofttimes, when he was glorified of many, he would speak after this wise: "I may yet have sons and daughters, praise me not as one that is safe. No man should be praised before that his end be known." This unto them that praised him, unto himself this: "Had the Most High shewn such favours unto a robber, he would have been better pleasing than thou, Francis." Ofttimes he would say unto the Brethren: "Concerning all that a sinner can do, none aught to flatter himself

with undeserved praise. A sinner, (he saith), can fast, pray, lament, and mortify his own body,— this one thing he cannot do, to wit, be faithful unto his Lord. In this, then, we may glory, if we render unto the Lord the glory that is His due, and if, while serving him faithfully, we ascribe unto Him whatsoever He giveth."

Holy obedience

4. Now this Gospel merchant,—that he might in many ways make profit, and make the whole time that now is be turned into merit,—was fain not so much to be set in authority as to be set under authority, not so much to command as to obey. Wherefore, giving up his office unto the Minister General, he sought a Warden, unto whose will he might submit him in all things. For he maintained that the fruit of holy obedience was so rich as that they who placed their necks under her yoke spent no portion of their time without profit; wherefore he was ever wont to promise and to render obedience unto the Brother that was his companion. He said once unto his companions: "Among other gifts that the divine goodness hath deigned to bestow upon me, it hath conferred this grace, that I would as heedfully obey the novice of an hour, were he appointed unto me for Warden, as I would the oldest and wisest Brother. The subordinate, (saith he), ought to regard him that is set in authority over him not as a man, but as Him for love of Whom he doth make himself subject. And the more despicable is he that commandeth, the more acceptable is the humility of him that obeyeth."

When once it was enquired of him what man

Parable of the dead body

should be esteemed truly obedient, he set before them as an ensample the similitude of a dead body. "Lift up," saith he, "a dead body, and place it where thou wilt. Thou shalt see it will not murmur at being moved, it will not complain of where it is set, it will not cry out if left there. If it be set in a lofty seat, it will look not up, but down. If it be clad in purple, it but redoubleth its pallor. This, (saith he), is the truly obedient man, who reasoneth not why he is moved, who careth not where he be placed, who urgeth not that he should be transferred; who, when set in authority, preserveth his wonted humility, and the more he is honoured, considereth himself the more unworthy."

5. He said once unto his companion: "I esteem not myself to be a Brother Minor unless I be in the state that I shall describe unto thee. Lo now, I suppose me to be one set in authority over the Brethren; I go unto the Chapter, I preach unto the Brethren and exhort them, and at the end they speak against me, saying: "Thou mislikest us, for that thou art unlettered, slow of speech, a fool, and simple," and thus I am cast forth with reviling, little esteemed of all. I tell thee,—unless I can hear such words with unchanged countenance, with unchanged gladness of spirit and unchanged holy intent,—I am vainly called a Brother Minor." And he added, "In exalted place there is the fear of fall, in praises a precipice, in the humility of a submissive spirit there is profit. Why then do we look for perils rather than profits, when we have had time bestowed on us that we may make profit therein?"

The true Brother Minor

From this same reason of humility, Francis was minded that his Brethren should be called by the name of *Minors*, and that the rulers of his Order should be called Ministers, that thus he might employ the very words of the Gospel that he had vowed to observe, and that his followers might learn from their very name that they had come to learn humility in the school of the humble Christ. For that Teacher of humility, Christ Jesus, when He would teach His disciples what was perfect humility, said: "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant."

When therefore the Lord Bishop of Ostia, the protector and chief helper of the Order of Brothers Minor, (he that afterward, as the holy man had foretold, was raised unto the dignity of the Supreme Pontificate, under the name of Gregory the Ninth), enquired of him whether it would be his will for his Brethren to be promoted unto high places in the Church, he made answer: "Lord, my Brethren be called Minors with this very intent, that they may not arrogate unto themselves to be called greater. If thou art fain, (saith he), that they should bear fruit in the Church of God, maintain and keep them in the state of their calling, and in no wise suffer them to rise unto rulership in the Church."

6. Now since in himself as well as in them that obey he set humility before all honours, God, Who loveth the humble, deemed him worthy of loftier heights, as a vision sent from heaven made evident unto a Brother that was of an especial

The throne in heaven

holiness and devoutness. For he had been in the company of the man of God, and, together with him, had been praying with fervour of spirit in a certain deserted church, when, falling into an ecstasy, he beheld among many seats in heaven one that was more honourable than the rest, adorned with precious stones, and shining with utmost splendour. Marvelling within himself at the splendour of this exalted throne, he began to consider with anxious thought who should be deemed worthy to sit thereon. Then, as he considered, he heard a voice saying unto him: "This seat pertained unto one of the fallen Angels, and is now kept for the humble Francis." At length, when the Brother had come back unto himself from that trance of prayer, he followed the holy man as he went forth, as was his wont. And as they walked by the way, conversing of God each in turn, that Brother, not unmindful of his vision, enquired of him discreetly what he thought of himself. And the humble servant of Christ answered him: "I think myself the chief of sinners." When the Brother said in opposition that he could not, with a sound conscience, say or feel this, Francis added: "If any man, howsoever guilty, had received such mercy from Christ as I, I verily think he would have been far more acceptable unto God than I." Then, by the hearing of such marvellous humility, the Brother was assured of the truth of the vision that had been shewn him, knowing by the witness of the Holy Gospel that the truly humble shall be exalted unto that excellent glory wherefrom the proud is cast down.

7. On another time, when that he was praying in a deserted church in the province of Massa, nigh Monte Casale, he learnt through the Spirit that certain holy relics had been deposited there. Perceiving with sorrow that for a long time past they had been deprived of the reverence due unto them, he bade the Brethren bring them unto the place, with all honour. But when, need arising, he had departed from them, his sons were forgetful of their Father's behest, and neglected the merit of obedience. Then on a day, when they were fain to celebrate the holy mysteries, and the upper covering of the altar was removed, they found, not without amazement, some bones right fair and fragrant, beholding the relics that the power of God, not men's hands, had brought thither. Returning shortly after, the man devoted unto God began to make diligent enquiry whether his behest concerning the relics had been carried out. The Brethren humbly confessed their sin of neglected obedience, and gained pardon, with an award of penance. And the holy man said: "Blessed be the Lord my God, Who Himself hath fulfilled that which ye ought to have done." Consider heedfully the care of the divine providence for our dust, and weigh the goodness of the humble Francis, that did excel in the sight of God. For when man obeyed not his bidding, God fulfilled his desires.

Of certain relics

8. Coming on a time unto Imola, he approached the Bishop of the city, and humbly besought him that, with his sanction, he might call the people together to preach unto them. The Bishop answered him harshly, saying: "It sufficeth,

The Bishop of Imola

Brother, that I myself preach unto my pe
Francis, in his true humility, bowed his hea
went forth; howbeit, after a short space, h
turned into the house. When the Bishop, a
in wrath, asked of him what he meant by co
again, he replied, with humility alike of heart
voice, "Lord, if a father drive his son forth
one door, he must enter again by another." V
quished by his humility, the Bishop embraced
with eager mien, saying: "Thou and all
Brethren shall from henceforward have a gene
license to preach throughout my diocese, for t
thy holy humility hath earned."

9. It befell once that he came unto Arezzo
a time when the whole city was shaken by a civ
war that threatened its speedy ruin. As he wa
lodging in the outskirts of the city, he beheld th
demons exulting above it, and inflaming the angry
citizens unto mutual slaughter. Then, that he
might put to flight those powers of the air that
were stirring up the strife, he sent forward as his
herald Brother Silvester, a man of dovelike
simplicity, saying: "Go out before the city
gate, and, on behalf of God Almighty, command
the demons in the power of obedience to depart
with all speed." The Brother, in his true obedi-
ence, hastened to perform his Father's behests,
and, coming before the presence of the Lord with
thanksgiving, began to cry with a loud voice
before the city gate: "On behalf of God Al-
mighty, and at the bidding of His servant Francis,
depart far from hence, all ye demons!" At
once the city was restored unto a state of peace,
and all the citizens peacefully and quietly began

to fashion anew their civil laws. Thus when the raging arrogance of the demons had been driven out, that had held the city as it were in a state of siege, the wisdom of the poor, to wit, the humility of Francis, came unto its aid, and restored peace, and saved the city. For by the merit of the difficult virtue of humble obedience, he obtained so powerful an authority over those rebellious and insolent spirits as that he could restrain their fierce arrogance, and put to flight their lawless molestation.

Demons put to flight

10. The proud demons flee before the lofty virtues of the humble, save when at times the divine mercy permitteth them to buffet them that humility may be preserved, even as the Apostle Paul writeth concerning himself, and as Francis learnt by experience. For when the lord Cardinal of Sta. Croce, Leo, did invite him to tarry for a while with him in Rome, he humbly agreed thereunto, for the reverence and love that he bore him. When on the first night, his prayers ended, he was fain to sleep, the demons rose up against the soldier of Christ, cruelly attacking him, and, when they had beaten him long and sorely, at the last left him as it were half dead. On their departure, the man of God called his companion, and when he came, related unto him the whole affair, adding: "I believe, Brother, that the demons, who can avail naught save in so far as the divine providence permitteth them, have now assailed me thus furiously because that my lodging in the palaces of the great affordeth no good ensample. My Brethren that sojourn in poor little abodes, when they hear that I lodge with Cardinals, will perchance surmise that I am being entangled

Mercy toward penitents

in worldly affairs, that I am carried away by honours paid me, and that I am abounding in luxuries. Wherefore I deem it better that he who is set for an ensample should shun palaces, and should walk humbly among the humble in humble abodes, that he may make those that bear poverty strong, by himself bearing the like." At morn, then, they came and, humbly excusing themselves, took farewell of the Cardinal.

11. The holy man did in truth loathe pride,—the root of all evils,—and disobedience, its most evil offspring, yet none the less he would alway receive the humility of the penitent. It befell once that a certain Brother was brought unto him who had transgressed against the rule of obedience, and deserved correction by a just discipline. But the man of God, perceiving by manifest tokens that that Brother was truly contrite, was moved by his love of humility to spare him. Howbeit, that the easiness of gaining pardon should not be a pretext unto others for wrongdoing, he bade that his hood should be taken from that Brother, and cast into the midst of the flames, that all might take note by what grave punishment sins of disobedience were to be chastised. When the hood had lain for some time in the midst of the fire, he bade that it should be withdrawn from the flames, and restored unto the Brother that was humbly penitent. Marvellous to relate, the hood, when withdrawn from the midst of the flames, shewed no trace of burning. Thus it came to pass that, through this one miracle, God commended both the virtue of the holy man, and the humility of penitence.

Thus the humility of Francis is meet to be imitated, that even on earth gained such wondrous honour as that God condescended unto his desires, and changed the feelings of men, drove forth the arrogance of demons at his bidding, and by a mere gesture bridled the ravenous flames. Verily, this humility it is that exalteth them that possess it, and that, while paying respect unto all, from all gaineth honour.

The power of humility

CHAPTER VII

OF HIS LOVE FOR POVERTY, AND OF THE WONDROUS SUPPLYING OF HIS NEEDS

The Lady Poverty

1. Among other gifts of graces that Francis had received from the bounteous Giver, he merited to abound, as by an especial prerogative all his own, in the riches of simplicity, through his love of sublimest Poverty. The holy man regarded Poverty as the familiar friend of the Son of God, and as one now rejected by the whole world, and was zealous to espouse her with such a constant affection as that not only did he leave father and mother for her sake, but he did even part with all that might have been his. For none was ever so greedy of gold as he of poverty, nor did any man ever guard treasure more anxiously than he this Gospel pearl. One thing more than aught else was displeasing in his eyes, to wit, if he beheld aught in the Brethren that was not wholly in accord with poverty. He himself, verily, from his entrance into the Religion until his death was content with, and counted himself rich with, a tunic, a cord, and breeches. Ofttimes with tears he would recall unto mind the poverty of Christ Jesus, and of His Mother, declaring Poverty to be the queen of virtues inasmuch as she shone forth thus excellently in the King of Kings and in the Queen His Mother. And when the Brethren in

council asked of him which virtue would render a man most pleasing unto Christ, he answered, as though laying bare the secret thought of his heart, "Ye know, Brethren, that poverty is an especial way of salvation, being as it were the food of humility, and the root of perfection, and her fruits are manifold, albeit hidden. For poverty is that treasure hid in a field of the Gospel, which to buy a man would sell all that he hath, and the things that cannot be sold are to be despised in comparison therewith."

Her excellences

2. He also said, "He that would attain this height must needs in all ways renounce, not alone the wisdom of the world, but even knowledge of letters, so that, dispossessed of such an inheritance, he may go in the strength of the Lord, and give himself up naked into the arms of the Crucified. For in vain doth he utterly renounce the world who keepeth in the secret places of his heart a shrine for his own senses." Ofttimes indeed would he discourse of poverty, impressing on the Brethren that saying of the Gospel, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His Head." Wherefore he would teach the Brethren that, after the fashion of the poor, they should build poor little houses, wherein they should dwell, not as their owners, but as pilgrims and strangers dwell in other men's houses. For he said that the rules of pilgrims were to abide under a strange roof, to thirst for their fatherland, and to pass on their way in peace. More than once, he bade houses that had been built be pulled down, or the Brethren removed thence, if he saw in them aught

Poverty the foundation

that by reason of ownership or of magnificence was opposed unto Gospel poverty. Poverty he declared to be the foundation of his Order, and, with this first laid as a basis, he said the whole edifice of the Religion would so rest upon it as that, while it stood firm, the Religion stood firm; were it overthrown, that other likewise would be overthrown from the foundations.

3. Furthermore, he taught, as he had learnt by revelation, that the entrance into holy Religion must be made through that saying of the Gospel: "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor"; and accordingly he would admit none into the Order that had not dispossessed themselves, keeping absolutely naught back, both because of the saying of the Holy Gospel, and that there might be no treasure-chests laid up to cause scandal. Thus, when a certain man, in the March of Ancona, sought to be received into the Order, the true patriarch of the poor made answer: "If thou art fain to be joined unto the poor of Christ, part thy goods among the poor of this world." Hearing this, the man arose, and, led by carnal affection, bequeathed his goods unto his own kin, and naught unto the poor. But when the holy man heard of this from his own mouth, he chid him with stern reproofs, saying: "Go thy way, brother fly, for thou hast not yet gotten thee out from thy kindred and from thy father's house. Thou hast given thy goods unto thy kin, and hast cheated the poor, thou art not meet for the holy poor. Thou hast begun in the flesh, and hast laid but a shaking foundation for a spiritual edifice." Then that

carnal man returned unto his kin, and sought again his goods, the which he was not minded to bequeath unto the poor; thus quickly he abandoned his virtuous intent.

Poverty at all costs

4. At another time, there was in the place of Saint Mary of the Little Portion such scarcity as that they could not provide for the guest Brethren as their needs demanded. Accordingly, his Vicar went unto the man of God, pleading the destitution of the Brethren, and begging that he would permit some portion of the novices' goods to be retained on their entrance, so that the Brethren might resort thereunto for their expenditure in times of need. Unto whom Francis, instructed in the heavenly counsels, made reply: "Far be it from us, dearest Brother, to act wickedly against the Rule for the sake of any man whomsoever. I had liefer that thou shouldst strip the altar of the glorious Virgin, when our need demandeth it, than that thou shouldst attempt aught, be it but a little thing, against our vow of poverty and the observance of the Gospel. For the Blessed Virgin would be better pleased that her altar should be despoiled, and the counsel of the Holy Gospel perfectly fulfilled, than that her altar should be adorned, and the counsel given by her Son set aside."

5. When on a time the man of God was passing, with a companion, through Apulia, and was nigh unto Bari, he found in the road a great purse, swelling as though full of coins, such as in the common speech is called *funda*. The poor man of Christ was exhorted, and earnestly besought, by his companion, to lift the purse from the ground,

The snare of the purse

and distribute the money among the poor. But the man of God refused, declaring that there was some devilish contrivance in the purse that they had found, and that what the Brother was proposing was no good deed but a sin, to wit, taking goods not their own and giving them away. They left the spot, and hastened to complete the journey on which they had entered. Howbeit, that Brother would not hold his peace, deceived by an empty piety, but still vexed the man of God, as though he were one who cared naught for relieving the destitution of the poor. At length the gentle Francis consented to return unto the spot, not to fulfil the desire of the Brother, but to unmask the wiles of the devil. Accordingly, returning where the purse lay, with the Brother and with a youth who was on the road, he first prayed, and then bade his companion take it up. The Brother trembled and was adread, now presaging some devilish portent; nevertheless, by reason of the command of holy obedience, he conquered the doubts of his heart, and stretched forth his hand unto the purse. Lo! a serpent of no mean size leapt forth from the purse, and at once vanished together with it, shewing that it had been a snare of the devil. The wiles of the enemy's cunning being thus apparent, the holy man said unto his companion: "Money, O my brother, is unto the servants of God naught else than the devil and a poisonous serpent."

6. After this, a wondrous thing befell the holy man while that, at the call of a pressing need, he was betaking him unto the city of Siena. Three poor women, alike in all respects as to height,

Apparition of the three maidens

age, and countenance, met him on the wide plain between Campiglio and San Quirico, proffering a new greeting by way of gift: "Welcome," said they, "Lady Poverty!" At these words, that true lover of poverty was filled with joy unspeakable, inasmuch as there was naught in him that he would so lief have saluted by men as that whereof they had made mention. On a sudden the women vanished, whereupon the Brethren that were his companions pondered on their wondrous resemblance each unto the other, and on the newness of their greeting, their appearing, and their vanishing, and deemed, not without reason, that some mystery was thereby signified concerning the holy man. Verily, by those three poor women,—for such they seemed,—with such resemblance in countenance, that met him, that gave him such unwonted greeting, and that so suddenly vanished, it was fittingly shewn that the beauty of Gospel perfection,—touching chastity, to wit, and obedience, and poverty,—shone forth perfectly in kindred form in the man of God; howbeit, he had chosen to make his chief boast in the privilege of Poverty, whom he was wont to name now his mother, now his bride, now his lady. In this, he was greedy to surpass others, he who thereby had learnt to think himself of less account than all others. Accordingly, if ever he saw any man who, judging by his outward appearance, was poorer than himself, he would forthwith blame himself, and stir himself up unto the like, as though, striving jealously after poverty, he feared to be outdone by that other.

It chanced once that he met a poor man on the

The ignity of Poverty

road, and, beholding his nakedness, was strick the heart, and said with a sighing voice untc companion: "This man's destitution hath brou on us great reproach, for we have chosen Pov as our great riches, and lo! she shineth forth m clearly in him."

7. By reason of his love for holy Poverty, t servant of Almighty God had far liefer partake alms begged from door to door than of food s before him. Thus, if ever he was invited by grea folk, who would fain honour him by a well-sprea board, he would first beg crusts of bread from the neighbouring houses, and then, thus enriched in his poverty, sit down at the board. Once he did thus when he had been invited by the lord Bishop of Ostia, who loved the poor man of Christ with an especial affection, and when the Bishop complained that it brought shame upon him that a guest at his table should go forth for alms, the servant of God made answer: "My lord, I have done you a great honour, while honouring a greater Lord. For poverty is well-pleasing unto the Lord, and that before all which is a free-will beggary for the sake of Christ. This royal dignity,—that the Lord Jesus took upon Him when for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich, and that He might make them that be truly poor in spirit kings and heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven,—I am not minded to abandon for a fee of deceptive riches lent unto you for an hour."

8. Ofttimes when he was exhorting the Brethren to go forth for alms, he would speak on this wise: "Go forth," saith he, "since at this eleventh

hour the Brothers Minor have been lent unto the world, that the number of the elect may be in them fulfilled; wherefore they shall be praised by the Judge, and shall hear those most delectable words: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." Accordingly, he would say it was a delightsome thing to beg under the name of Brothers Minor, since the Master of Gospel truth had with His own mouth thus spoken of that name,—"the least,"—in the rewarding of the just.

The bread of alms Angels' food

Moreover, on the chief Feasts, when opportunity offered, he was wont to go begging, saying that in the holy poor was fulfilled that prophecy: "Man did eat Angels' food." For he said that bread was truly Angels' food that was begged for the love of God, and with the aid of the blessed Angels, and that holy Poverty gathered from door to door, where it was bestowed for love of her.

9. Accordingly, when he was once sojourning on the holy Easter Day in an hermitage so distant from the dwellings of men as that he could not conveniently go forth to beg, mindful of Him Who on that day had appeared unto the disciples going unto Emmaus in the guise of a pilgrim, he, as a pilgrim and beggar, did ask alms from the Brethren themselves. And, having humbly received them, he taught them in holy discourse that while passing through the wilderness of the world as pilgrims and strangers, and Israelites indeed, they might celebrate continually, as those poor in spirit, the Lord's Passover, to wit, His departure from this world unto the Father. And

Poverty succouring where money failed

since in asking alms he was moved, not by desire for gain, but by a free spirit, God, the Father of the poor, seemed to have an especial care of him.

10. It chanced once that the servant of the Lord had been weighed down by sickness in the place called Nocera, and was being brought back unto Assisi by an honourable escort, sent for this purpose by the devotion of the people of Assisi. And they, escorting the servant of Christ, reached a poor little hamlet, Satriano by name, whither, since their hunger and the hour demanded it, they went to seek food, but, finding naught that they could buy, returned empty handed. Then the holy man said unto them: "Naught have ye found, for that ye put more trust in your flies than in God,"—for he was wont to call money *flies*. "But go back, (saith he), among the houses that ye have visited, and, offering the love of God as your payment, humbly ask an alms. And do not by a false reckoning esteem this a thing shameful or base, since the great Almsgiver hath in His abounding goodness granted all things as alms unto the worthy and unworthy alike, after we have sinned." Then those knights laid aside their shamefastness, and of their own accord asked for alms, and bought more for the love of God than they had been able to for money. For the poor inhabitants of the place, stricken to the heart by a divine impulse, freely proffered not only their goods, but their very selves. Thus it befell that the necessity, which money had not availed to relieve, was supplied by the rich poverty of Francis.

11. On a time when he was lying sick in an

The physician's reward

hermitage nigh Rieti, a certain physician did oft visit him with welcome ministries. And since the poor man of Christ was unable to give him a recompense meet for his toil, the most bountiful God, on behalf of His poor, rewarded his kindly service by this singular benefit, that he might not depart with no immediate fee. The house of the physician, which he had at that time built anew with the whole of his savings, by a gaping cleavage of the walls from top to bottom threatened so speedy a collapse as that it seemed impossible that any mortal skill or toil should avert its fall. Then the physician, entirely trusting in the merits of the holy man, with great faith and devotion besought from his companions the gift of some thing that that same man of God had touched with his hands. Accordingly, having with much importunity of pleading gained a few of his hairs, he laid them at even in the cleavage of the wall; then, rising next morn, he found the opening so firmly sealed as that he could not withdraw the relics he had placed therein, nor find any trace of the former cleavage. Thus it came to pass that he who had diligently tended the frail body of God's servant was able to avert the danger from his own frail house.

12. On another time, when the man of God was fain to betake him unto a certain solitude, where he might more freely give himself up unto contemplation, he rode, being weak in body, upon the ass of a poor man. While this man was following the servant of Christ in the summer heat, and up mountain ways, he became worn out by the journey, as the path grew ever rougher and

Water and food in dire straits

longer, and, fainting with exceeding and burning thirst, he began to cry aloud with importunity after the Saint: "Lo! (saith he), I shall die of thirst, if I be not at once refreshed by the help of some draught!" Without delay, the man of God got off the ass, fell on his knees, and, raising his hands unto heaven, ceased not to pray until he knew that he had been heard. His prayer at length ended, he said unto the man: "Hasten unto yonder rock, and there thou shalt find a spring of water, that Christ in His mercy hath at this hour caused to flow from the rock for thee to drink." O marvellous condescension of God, that doth so readily incline unto His servants! The thirsty man drank the water produced from the rock by the power of him that prayed, and drained a draught from the flinty rock. Before that time there had been no flowing water there, nor from that time,—as hath been carefully ascertained,—hath any been found there.

13. Now in what manner, by the merits of His poor one, Christ multiplied provisions at sea, shall be related in its own place hereafter; suffice it to note this only, that by the scanty alms brought unto him he saved the sailors from the peril of famine and of death during many days; thus it may be clearly seen that the servant of God Almighty, as he was made like unto Moses in the drawing of water from the rock, was made like also unto Elias in the multiplying of food. Wherefore let all anxious thought be far removed from the poor ones of Christ. For if the poverty of Francis was of such an abundant sufficiency as

that it supplied by its wondrous power the needs of them that assisted him,—so that neither food, nor drink, nor house failed them, when the resources of money, of skill, and of nature had proved of none avail,—much more shall it merit those things that in the wonted course of the divine providence are granted unto all alike. If, I say, the stony rock, at the prayer of one poor man, poured forth a copious draught for another poor man in his thirst, naught in the whole creation will refuse its service unto those who have left all for the sake of the Creator of all.

marvellously provided

CHAPTER VIII

OF THE KINDLY IMPULSES OF HIS PIETY, AND OF HOW THE CREATURES LACKING UNDERSTANDING SEEMED TO BE MADE SUBJECT UNTO HIM

Piety toward God and man

1. THAT true godliness which, according unto the Apostle, is profitable unto all things, had so filled the heart of Francis and entered into his inmost parts as that it seemed to have established its sway absolutely over the man of God. It was this piety that, through devotion, uplifted him toward God; through compassion, transformed him into the likeness of Christ; through condescension, inclined him unto his neighbour, and, through his all-embracing love for every creature, set forth a new picture of man's estate before the Fall. And as by this piety he was touched with kindly feeling for all things, so above all, when he beheld souls redeemed by the precious Blood of Christ Jesus being defiled by any stain of sin, he would weep over them with such tenderness of compassion as that he seemed, like a mother in Christ, to be in travail of them daily. And this was with him the chief cause of his veneration for the ministers of the word of God, to wit, that with devout care they raise up seed unto the Brother which is dead, that is, unto Christ crucified for sinners, by converting such, and cherish the same seed with careful devotion. This ministry of compassion

he maintained was more acceptable unto the Father of mercies than all sacrifice, in especial if it were performed with the zeal of perfect charity, so that this end might be striven after by ensample rather than by precept, by tearful prayer rather than by eloquent speech.

Ensample before precept

2. Accordingly, he would say that that preacher should be deplored as one without true piety, who in his preaching did not seek the salvation of souls, but his own glory, or who by the sins of his life pulled down that which he built up by the truth of his teaching. He would say that the Brother simple and unready of speech, who by his good ensample inciteth others unto good, should be preferred before such an one. That saying, moreover: "The barren hath borne many," he would thus expound: "The barren, (saith he), is the little poor Brother, who hath not the function of begetting sons in the Church. He in the Judgement shall bear many, for that those whom he now converteth unto Christ by his secret prayers shall be then added unto his glory by the Judge. And 'she that hath many children is waxed feeble,' for that the empty preacher of many words who now boasteth in many begotten, as it were, by his power, shall then perceive that there is naught of his own in them."

3. Since then with heartfelt piety and glowing zeal he sought after the salvation of souls, he would say that he was filled with the sweetest fragrance, and anointed as with precious ointment whensoever he heard of many being led into the way of truth by the sweet savour of the repute of the holy Brethren scattered throughout the

od and vil en-amples

world. Hearing such reports, he would rejoice in spirit, heaping with blessings most worthy of all acceptance those Brethren who, by word or deed, were bringing sinners unto the love of Christ. In like wise, those who were transgressing against holy Religion by their evil works, fell under the heaviest sentence of his curse. "By Thee," saith he, "O Lord most holy, by the entire company of heaven, and by me, Thy little one, be they accursed who by their evil ensample do bring unto naught and destroy that which through the holy Brethren of this Order Thou hast built up, and dost not cease to build." Oftentimes he was affected by such sadness, by reason of the stumbling-block unto the weak brethren, that he thought his strength would have failed him, had he not been sustained by the comfort of the Divine mercy.

But when once on a time he was disquieted because of evil ensamples, and with troubled spirit was beseeching the merciful Father for his sons, he obtained an answer on this wise from the Lord: "Why dost thou fret thee, poor little mortal? Have I set thee as shepherd over My Religion that thou shouldst forget I am its chief Protector? I have appointed thee, simple as thou art, for this very end, that the things that I shall perform through thee may be ascribed, not unto man's working, but unto grace from above. I have called this Religion, I will keep it and feed it, and, when some fall off, I will raise up others in their place, yea, so that, were none born, I would even cause them to be born. And by whatsoever shocks this little poor Religion may be

shaken, it shall alway abide unscathed under My guard."

The sin of slander

4. The vice of slander, hateful unto the fount of goodness and grace, Francis would shrink from as from a serpent's tooth, declaring it to be a most hateful plague, and an abomination unto the most holy God, forasmuch as the slanderer feedeth on the blood of those souls that he hath slain by the sword of his tongue. Hearing once a certain Brother blacken the repute of another, he turned unto his Vicar, and said: "Rise, rise, make careful inquiry, and, if thou findest the accused Brother to be guiltless, with stern discipline make the accuser to be marked of all." At times, indeed, he would sentence him who had despoiled his Brother of the praise of his good repute to be himself despoiled of his habit, and deemed that he ought not to be able to lift up his eyes unto God unless first he had exerted himself to restore, as best he might, that which he had taken away. "The sin of slanderers," he would say, "is more heinous than that of robbers, inasmuch as the law of Christ,—that is fulfilled in the observance of godliness,—bindeth us to desire more the salvation of the soul than of the body."

5. Unto them that were afflicted with bodily suffering of any sort, he would condescend with a marvellous tenderness of sympathy; if he perceived in any aught of destitution, aught of lack, he would in the gentleness of his devout heart carry it unto Christ. Mercy, verily, was inborn in him, and redoubled by the shedding upon it of the piety of Christ. Thus his soul was melted over the poor and the weak, and, when he could

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e poor

not open his hand unto any, he opened his hea
It chanced on a time that one of the Brethr
had made somewhat harsh reply unto a poor ma
that importunately asked an alms. When th
devout lover of the poor heard it, he bade tha
Brother throw himself, naked, at the poor man'
feet, declare himself in fault, and beg the favour
of his prayer and his pardon. When he had
humbly done this, the Father gently added:
"When thou seest a poor man, O Brother, a
mirror is set before thee of the Lord, and of His
Mother in her poverty. In the infirm, do thou
in like manner think upon the infirmities that He
took upon Him." In all the poor, he,—himself
the most Christlike of all poor men,—beheld the
image of Christ, wherefore he judged that all
things that were provided for himself,—were they
even the necessaries of life,—should be given
up unto any poor folk whom he met, and that not
only as largesse, but even as if they were their
own property.

It befell on a time that a certain beggar met
him, as he was returning from Siena, when by
reason of sickness he was wrapped in a cloak over
his habit. Beholding with pitiful eye the poor
man's misery; "It behoveth us," said he unto
his companion, "to restore the cloak unto this
poor man, for his own it is. For we received it
but as a loan, until it should be our hap to find
another poorer than ourselves." But his com-
panion, having regard unto the need of the kindly
Father, did urgently seek to refrain him from pro-
viding for another, leaving himself uncared-for.
Howbeit, "I think," saith he, "the great Alms-

giver would account it a theft in me did I not give that I wear unto one needing it more." Accordingly he was wont to ask from those that had given him necessities for the succour of his body permission to give them away, did he meet a needier person, so that he might do so with their sanction. Naught would he withhold, neither cloak, nor habit, nor books, nor the very ornaments of the altar, but all these he would, while he could, bestow upon the needy, that he might fulfil the ministry of charity. Ofttimes whenas he met on the road poor folk carrying burdens, he would lay their burdens on his own weak shoulders.

Love for all creatures.

6. When he bethought him of the first beginning of all things, he was filled with a yet more overflowing charity, and would call the dumb animals, howsoever small, by the names of *brother* and *sister*, forasmuch as he recognised in them the same origin as in himself. Yet he loved with an especial warmth and tenderness those creatures that do set forth by the likeness of their nature the holy gentleness of Christ, and in the interpretation of Scripture are a type of Him. Ofttimes he would buy back lambs that were being taken to be killed, in remembrance of that most gentle Lamb Who brooked to be brought unto the slaughter for the redemption of sinners.

On a time when the servant of God was lodging at the Monastery of San Verecondo in the diocese of Gubbio, an ewe gave birth unto a lamb one night. There was hard by a very fierce sow, and she, sparing not the innocent life, slew him with her greedy jaws. When the gentle

and specially for lambs

Father heard thereof, he was moved with wondrous pity, and, remembering that Lamb without spot, mourned over the dead lamb in the presence of all, saying: "Woe is me, brother little lamb, innocent creature, setting forth Christ unto men! Cursed be that evil beast that hath devoured thee, and of her flesh let neither man nor beast eat." Marvellous to relate, the cruel sow forthwith began to languish, and in three days paid the penalty in her own body, and suffered death as her retribution. Her carcase was cast forth into a ditch near the Monastery, and there lay for a long time, dried up like a board, and food for no famished beast. Let human evil-doing, then, take note by what a punishment it shall be overtaken at the last, if the savageness of a brute beast was smitten by a death so awful: let faithful devotion also consider how in the servant of God was shewn a piety of such marvellous power and abundant sweetness, as that even the nature of brute beasts, after their own fashion, acclaimed it.

7. While he was journeying nigh the city of Siena, he came on a great flock of sheep in the pastures. And when he had given them gracious greeting, as was his wont, they left their feeding, and all ran toward him, raising their heads, and gazing fixedly on him with their eyes. So eagerly did they acclaim him as that both the shepherds and the Brethren marvelled, beholding around him the lambs, and the rams no less, thus wondrously filled with delight.

At another time, at Saint Mary of the Little Portion, a lamb was brought unto the man of God, the which he thankfully received, by reason

of the love of guilelessness and simplicity that the lamb's nature doth exhibit. The holy man exhorted the lamb that it should be instant in the divine praises, and avoid any occasion of offence unto the Brethren; the lamb, on its part, as though it had observed the piety of the man of God, diligently obeyed his instructions. For when it heard the Brethren chanting in the choir, it too would enter the church, and, unbidden of any, would bend the knee, bleating before the altar of the Virgin Mother of the Lamb, as though it were fain to greet her. Furthermore, at the elevation of the most holy Body of Christ in the solemn Mass, it would bend its knees and bow, even as though the sheep, in its reverence, would reprove the irreverence of the undevout, and would incite Christ's devout people to revere the Sacrament.

Two lambs that he had

At one time he had with him in Rome a lamb, by reason of his reverence for that Lamb most gentle, and it he entrusted unto a noble matron, to wit, the lady Jacoba di Settesoli, to be cared for in her bower. This lamb, like one instructed in spiritual things by the Saint, when the lady went into church, kept closely by her side in going and in returning. If in the early morning the lady delayed her rising, the lamb would rise and would butt her with its little horns, and rouse her by its bleatings, admonishing her with gestures and nods to hasten unto church. Wherefore the lamb, that had been a pupil of Francis, and was now become a teacher of devotion, was cherished by the lady as a creature marvellous and loveworthy.

Dumb creatures' love for him

8. At another time, at Greccio, a live leveret was brought unto the man of God, the which,—when set down free on the ground that it might escape whither it would,—at the call of the kindly Father leapt with flying feet into his bosom. He, fondling it in the instinctive tenderness of his heart, seemed to feel for it as a mother, and, bidding it in gentle tones beware of being recaptured, let it go free. But albeit it was set on the ground many times to escape, it did alway return unto the Father's bosom, as though by some hidden sense it perceived the tenderness of his heart; wherefore at length, by his command, the Brethren carried it away unto a safer and more remote spot.

In like manner, on an island of the lake of Perugia, a rabbit was caught and brought unto the man of God, and, albeit it fled from others, it entrusted itself unto his hands and bosom with the confidence of a tame creature.

As he was hastening by the lake of Rieti unto the hermitage of Greccio, a fisherman out of devotion brought unto him a water-fowl, the which he gladly received, and then, opening his hands, bade it depart; howbeit, it would not leave him. Then he, lifting his eyes unto heaven, remained for a long space in prayer, and, after a long hour returning unto himself as though from afar, gently bade the little bird depart, and praise the Lord. Then, having thus received his blessing and leave, it flew away, shewing joy by the movement of its body.

In like manner, from the same lake there was brought unto him a fine, live fish, which he called,

as was his wont, by the name of *brother*, and put back into the water nigh the boat. Then the fish played in the water nigh the man of God, and, as though drawn by love of him, would in no wise leave the boatside until it had received his blessing and leave.

The birds obey him

9. On another time, when he was walking with a certain Brother through the Venetian marshes, he chanced on a great host of birds that were sitting and singing among the bushes. Seeing them, he said unto his companion: "Our sisters the birds are praising their Creator, let us too go among them and sing unto the Lord praises and the canonical Hours." When they had gone into their midst, the birds stirred not from the spot, and when, by reason of their twittering, they could not hear each the other in reciting the Hours, the holy man turned unto the birds, saying: "My sisters the birds, cease from singing, while that we render our due praises unto the Lord." Then the birds forthwith held their peace, and remained silent until, having said his Hours at leisure and rendered his praises, the holy man of God again gave them leave to sing. And, as the man of God gave them leave, they at once took up their song again after their wonted fashion.

At Saint Mary of the Little Portion, hard by the cell of the man of God, a cicada sat on a fig-tree and chirped; and right often by her song she stirred up unto the divine praises the servant of the Lord, who had learnt to marvel at the glorious handiwork of the Creator even as seen in little things. One day he called her, and she, as

Sister Cicada though divinely taught, lighted upon his hand. When he said unto her: "Sing, my sister cicada, and praise the Lord thy Creator with thy glad lay," she obeyed forthwith, and began to chirp, nor did she cease until, at the Father's bidding, she flew back unto her own place. There for eight days she abode, on any day coming at his call, singing, and flying back, according as he bade her. At length the man of God said unto his companions: "Let us now give our sister cicada leave to go, for she hath gladdened us enough with her lay, stirring us up these eight days past unto the praises of God." And at once, his leave given, she flew away, nor was ever seen there again, as though she dared not in any wise transgress his command.

10. Once while he was lying ill at Siena a fresh-caught pheasant was sent unto him, alive, by a certain nobleman. The bird, so soon as it saw and heard the holy man, pressed nigh him with such friendliness as that it would in no wise brook to be parted from him. For, albeit it was several times set down in a vineyard outside the abode of the Brethren, so that it might escape if it would, it still ran back in haste unto the Father as though it had alway been brought up by his hand. Then, when it was given unto a certain man who was wont out of devotion to visit the servant of God, it seemed as though it grieved to be out of the sight of the gentle Father, and refused all food. At length, it was brought back unto the servant of God, and, so soon as it saw him, testified its delight by its gestures, and ate eagerly.

Brother Falcon

When he had come unto the solitudes of Alverna, to keep a Lent in honour of the Archangel Michael, birds of divers sort fluttered about his cell, and seemed by their tuneful chorus and joyous movements to rejoice at his coming, and to invite and entice the holy Father to tarry there. Seeing this, he said unto his companion: "I perceive, Brother, that it is in accord with the divine will that we should abide here for a space, so greatly do our sisters the little birds seem to take comfort in our presence." While, accordingly, he was sojourning in that place, a falcon that had its nest there bound itself by close ties of friendship unto him. For alway at that hour of night wherein the holy man was wont to rise for the divine office, the falcon was beforehand with its song and cries. And this was most acceptable unto the servant of God, the more so as that the great concern which the bird shewed for him shook from him all drowsiness of sloth. But when the servant of Christ was weighed down beyond his wont by infirmity, the falcon would spare him, and would not mark for him so early an awakening. At such times, as though taught of God, he would about dawn strike the bell of his voice with a light touch. Verily, there would seem to have been a divine omen, alike in the gladness of the birds of myriad species, and in the cries of the falcon, inasmuch as that praiser and worshipper of God, upborne on the wings of contemplation, was at that very place and time to be exalted by the vision of the Seraph.

11. At one time while he was sojourning in the hermitage of Greccio, the natives of that place

Plagues at Greccio

were plagued by manifold evils. For an herd of ravening wolves was devouring not beasts alone, but men also, and every year a hailstorm laid waste their corn and vineyards. Accordingly, when the herald of the Holy Gospel was preaching unto them under these afflictions, he said: "I promise you,—pledging the honour and glory of Almighty God,—that all this plague shall depart from you, and that the Lord will look upon you, and multiply your temporal goods if only, believing me, ye will take pity on your own selves, and will first make true confession, then bring forth fruits worthy of repentance. But again, I declare unto you that if, unthankful for His benefits, ye shall turn again unto your vomit, the plague will be renewed, the punishment will be redoubled, and greater wrath will be shewn upon you." Then from that very hour, they turned at his admonition unto repentance, and the disasters ceased, the perils passed over, nor was aught of havoc wrought by wolves or hailstorms. Nay more, what is yet more marvellous, if a hailstorm ever fell upon their neighbours' lands, as it neared their borders it was there stayed, or changed its course unto some other region. The hail observed, yea, and the wolves observed, the pact made with the servant of God, nor did they essay any more to break the law of natural piety by raging against men that had turned unto piety, so long as men in their turn, according unto the agreement, did not act wickedly against the most holy laws of God.

With holy affection, then, must we think on the holiness of this blessed man, that was of such

wondrous sweetness and might as that it conquered wild beasts, tamed woodland creatures, and taught tame ones, and inclined the nature of the brutes, that had revolted from fallen man, to obey him. For of a truth it is this piety which, allying all creatures unto itself, is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

cease at his prayer

CHAPTER IX

OF HIS ARDENT LOVE, AND YEARNING FOR MARTYRDOM

Saint Francis' devotion

1. Of the ardent love that glowed in Francis, the friend of the Bridegroom, who can avail to tell? He seemed utterly consumed, like unto a coal that is set on fire, by the flame of the love divine. For, at the mere mention of the love of the Lord, he was aroused, moved, and enkindled, as though the inner chords of his heart vibrated under the bow of the voice from without. He would say that it was a magnificent largesse to offer such wealth in exchange for alms, and that those who esteemed it of less worth than money were verily fools, for that the priceless price of the divine love alone availeth to purchase the kingdom of heaven, and His love Who hath loved us much is much to be loved.

That he might by all things be stirred up unto the divine love, he triumphed in all the works of the Lord's hands, and through the sight of their joy was uplifted unto their life-giving cause and origin. He beheld in fair things Him Who is the most fair, and, through the traces of Himself that He hath imprinted on His creatures, he everywhere followed on to reach the Beloved, making of all things a ladder for himself whereby he might ascend to lay hold on Him Who is the

altogether lovely. For by the impulse of his unexampled devotion he tasted that fountain of goodness that streameth forth, as in rivulets, in every created thing, and he perceived as it were an heavenly harmony in the concord of the virtues and actions granted unto them by God, and did sweetly exhort them to praise the Lord, even as the Prophet David had done.

and love for Christ,

2. Christ Jesus Crucified was laid, as a bundle of myrrh, in his heart's bosom, and he yearned to be utterly transformed into Him by the fire of his exceeding love. By reason of his chief and especial devotion unto Him, he would betake him unto desert places, and seclude himself in a cell, from the Feast of the Epiphany until the end of the forty days following, to wit, for the space of time wherein Christ had sojourned in the wilderness. There with all the abstinence from food and drink that he might compass, he devoted himself without interruption unto fasting, prayer, and the praises of God. With such glowing love was he moved toward Christ, yea, and with such intimate love did his Beloved repay his, that it seemed unto the servant of God himself that he felt his Saviour almost continually present before his eyes, even as he once revealed unto his companions in intimate converse.

Toward the Sacrament of the Lord's Body he felt a glowing devotion that consumed the very marrow of his bones, marvelling with utmost amazement at that most loving condescension and condescending love. Oft did he communicate, and so devoutly as to render others devout, while, as he tasted of the sweetness of that Lamb

for His Mother, and the Saints

without spot, he became like one inebriated in spirit, and rapt out of himself in ecstasy.

3. He loved with an unspeakable affection the Mother of the Lord Jesus Christ, forasmuch as that she had made the Lord of Glory our Brother, and that through her we have obtained mercy. In her, after Christ, he put his chief trust, making her his own patron and that of his Brethren, and in her honour he fasted most devoutly from the Feast of the Apostles Peter and Paul until the Feast of the Assumption. He was bound by ties of inseparable affection unto the Angelic spirits that do glow with wondrous fire to approach God, and in the kindling of elect souls, and out of devotion unto them he would fast for forty days from the Assumption of the glorious Virgin, remaining instant in prayer throughout that time. Unto the Blessed Michael Archangel,—inasmuch as his is the ministry of bringing souls before God,—he cherished an especial love and devotion, by reason of the ardent zeal that he had for the salvation of all such as should be saved. When he called to remembrance all the Saints, he was kindled afresh, as if they had been stones of fire, with the flame of heavenly love; he regarded with the utmost devotion all the Apostles, and in especial Peter and Paul, by reason of the glowing love that they bore toward Christ, and out of reverence and love for them he dedicated unto the Lord the fast of an especial Lent. The poor man of Christ had naught save two mites, to wit, his body and soul, that he could give away in his large-hearted charity. But these, for the love of Christ, he offered up so continuously as that at

all seasons, through the rigour of his fasting, he made an offering of his body, and through the fervour of his yearnings, of his spirit, sacrificing in the outer court a whole burnt-offering, and within, in the Temple, burning sweet incense.

His passion for souls

4. Now this exceeding devotion of love uplifted him into the divine in such wise as that his loving goodwill extended unto those that had received with him a like nature and grace. For it is no wonder if he, whose affectionate heart had made him kin unto all created things, was by the love of Christ drawn into yet closer kinship with such as were sealed with the likeness of their Creator, and redeemed by the Blood of their Maker. He esteemed himself no friend of Christ did he not cherish the souls that He had redeemed. He would say that naught was to be preferred before the salvation of souls, proving this chiefly by the fact that the Only-Begotten Son of God deigned to hang on the Cross for the sake of men's souls. Unto this end he wrestled in prayer, this was the theme of his preaching, and this the cause of his exceeding zeal in setting an ensample. Wherefore, whensoever some excessive austerity was blamed in him, he would make answer that he had been given as an ensample unto others. For albeit his guileless flesh had already voluntarily subjected itself unto his spirit, and needed no chastisement by reason of transgressions, nevertheless, for the sake of ensample, he was ever renewing in it punishments and penances, walking in hard paths for the sake of others. For he would say: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of Angels, and have not charity,

His desire for martyrdom

I shall set no ensample of virtues unto my neighbours, I shall profit others little, and mine own self naught."

5. He emulated, with an ardent flame of love, the glorious victory of the holy Martyrs, whose burning love could not be quenched, nor their constancy broken down. Accordingly he too, kindled by that perfect love that casteth out fear, yearned to offer himself up as a living sacrifice unto the Lord in martyr flames, that he might pay back somewhat in his turn unto Christ Who died for us, and might stir up others unto the love of God. Wherefore, in the sixth year from his conversion, burning with desire for martyrdom, he was minded to cross unto the regions of Syria to preach the Christian faith, and penitence, unto the Saracens and other infidels. When he had embarked on a ship that he might voyage thither, contrary winds prevailed, and he had perforce to land on the coasts of Slavonia. When he had delayed there some time, nor could find any ship that was then crossing the sea, feeling himself cheated of his desire, he besought some sailors that were making for Ancona to take him aboard, for the love of God. When they persisted in their refusal because of his lack of money, the man of God, putting all his trust in the goodness of the Lord, embarked secretly on board the ship with his companion. A certain man was present, —sent, as is believed, from God on behalf of His poor one,—and he took with him the necessary victual, and, calling unto him one on the ship that feared God, spake thus unto him: "Keep faithfully all these things for the poor Brethren that

lie hid on the ship, and in their hour of need deal them out unto them as a friend." It befell that, owing unto strong winds, the sailors were unable for many days to touch land anywhere, and had consumed all their own provisions, and only the alms brought for the poor man Francis were left. These, though they had been but scanty, were by the divine power so multiplied as that, during many days' delay at sea by reason of incessant storms, they fully supplied the needs of all until they made the port of Ancona. Then the sailors, seeing that through the servant of God they had escaped manifold agonies of death,—like men that had known the dire perils of the sea, and had seen the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep,—rendered thanks unto Almighty God, Who doth ever shew Himself marvellous and love-worthy in His friends and servants.

Alms multiplied at sea

6. When, leaving the sea behind, Francis began to travel through the land, sowing therein the seed of salvation, he gained rich sheaves. Then, because the fruit of martyrdom had so enchanted his heart that he preferred above all merits of virtues a costly death for Christ's sake, he took his way toward Morocco, that he might preach unto Miramolin and his people the Gospel of Christ, if by any means he might avail to gain the coveted palm. For he was borne along by so mighty a desire that, albeit weak in body, he outran the comrade of his pilgrimage, and flew with all speed to fulfil his purpose, like one inebriated in spirit. But when he had advanced as far as Spain, by the divine will, that reserved him for other ends, a very heavy sickness fell upon him, and

He seeketh the Soldan

hindered him so that he could not fulfil his desire. Then the man of God,—perceiving that his life in the body was still needful for the family that he had begotten, albeit he deemed that for himself to die was gain,—returned to feed the sheep that had been committed unto his care.

7. Howbeit his glowing charity urged his spirit on unto martyrdom, and yet a third time he essayed to set forth toward the infidels, that by the shedding of his blood the Faith of the Trinity might be spread abroad. Thus in the thirteenth year of his conversion he set forth for the regions of Syria, continually exposing himself unto many perils that so he might win entrance into the presence of the Soldan of Babylon. For at that time there was relentless war between the Christians and the Saracens, and the camps of both armies were pitched each over against the other in the plain, so that none might pass from one unto the other without peril of death. Moreover, a cruel edict had gone forth from the Soldan that any who should bring the head of a Christian should receive a gold bezant as reward. Nevertheless, the undaunted soldier of Christ, Francis, hoping that he was shortly about to gain his end, determined to continue on his way, not dismayed by the fear of death, but urged on by his yearning therefor. And as he prepared himself by prayer, he was strengthened of the Lord, and boldly chanted that verse of the Prophet: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me."

8. Then, taking the Brother that was his companion, Illuminato by name, a man verily of

illumination and virtue, they started on their way. And, meeting two lambs, the holy man was gladdened at the sight, and said unto his companion: "Put thy trust, Brother, in the Lord, for in us that saying of the Gospel is fulfilled: Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves." When they had gone on further, the bands of the Saracens met them, and they, like wolves making haste to fall upon sheep, brutally seized the servants of God, and cruelly and despitefully dragged them along, casting abuse at them, vexing them with stripes and binding them in fetters. Thus in manifold wise tormented and beaten down, they were brought before the Soldan, the divine counsel so disposing as the holy man had desired. When that prince demanded of them from whom, and for what purpose, and after what manner they had been sent, and how they had come thither, the servant of Christ, Francis, made answer with undaunted heart that he had been sent not by man, but by God Most High, that he might shew unto him and his people the way of salvation, and might preach the Gospel of truth. With such firmness of mind, with such courage of soul, and with such fervour of spirit he preached unto the Soldan aforesaid God Three and One and the Saviour of all, Jesus Christ, that in him was manifestly and truly fulfilled that saying of the Gospel: "I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist." For, as the Soldan beheld the marvellous fervour of spirit and valour of the man of God, he heard him gladly and did right earnestly invite him to

and preacheth unto him

The Ordeal by fire

tarry with him. Then the servant of Christ, taught by the heavenly counsel, said: "If thou, together with thy people, wilt be converted unto Christ, for the love of Him I will right gladly tarry among you. But if thou art hesitating whether to give up the law of Mahomet for the faith of Christ, do thou command that a great fire be kindled and I will enter the fire with thy priests, that even thus thou mayest learn which faith is the surer, and holier, and most worthy of being held. Unto whom the Soldan made answer: "I do not believe that any of my priests would be ready to expose himself unto the fire in defence of his faith, or to undergo any sort of torture." For he had seen that, so soon as mention of this was made, one of his priests, an aged man and one in authority, had fled from his presence. Unto whom the holy man replied: "If thou wilt promise me, on behalf of thyself and thy people, that thou wilt embrace the faith of Christ, if I come forth from the fire unscathed, I will enter the fire alone; if I am burned, let it be set down unto my sins, but if the divine might protect me, ye shall know that Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God, is the true God and the Lord and Saviour of all." Howbeit, the Soldan replied that he dare not accede unto this proposition, for that he feared a revolt of his people. But he offered him many costly gifts, all of which the man of God, hungering, not for worldly goods, but for the salvation of souls, contemned like mire. The Soldan, perceiving the holy man to be so absolute a despiser of worldly things, was moved with amazement and conceived

a greater devotion for him. And, albeit he would not, or perchance dared not, go over unto the Christian faith, he did nevertheless devoutly pray the servant of Christ to receive the gifts aforesaid, for his own salvation, and to bestow them upon Christian poor folk, or on churches. But Francis, for that he shunned the burden of money, and could not see in the soul of the Soldan any root of true piety, would not agree thereunto.

He returneth

9. Seeing, then, that he could neither make progress in the conversion of that people, nor attain his purpose, warned by a divine revelation, he returned unto the regions of the faithful. Now the mercy of God so ordained, and the virtue of the holy man merited, and mercifully and marvellously it befell, that the friend of Christ,—who with all his might sought a death for His sake, and yet in no way could find it,—nevertheless did not lose the coveted merit of martyrdom, and was reserved to be signalled out unto posterity by an especial distinction. Thus it befell that that divine fire glowed ever more hotly in his heart, so that afterward it was openly manifested in his flesh. O truly blessed man, whose flesh, albeit not stricken by the tyrant's steel, was nevertheless not left without the likeness of the Lamb that was slain! O fully and truly blessed, I say, whose life, albeit not cut off by the sword of the persecutor, did yet not lose the palm of martyrdom!

CHAPTER X

OF HIS ZEAL AND EFFICACY IN PRAYER

The power of prayer

1. FRANCIS, the servant of Christ, feeling himself in the body to be absent from the Lord, had now through the love of Christ become wholly untouched by earthly desires, wherefore,—that he might not be without the consolation of his Beloved,—he prayed without ceasing, striving ever to manifest a spirit present with God. Prayer was a consolation unto him in contemplation, while, being already made a fellow-citizen with the Angels in the circle of the heavenly mansions, with ardent yearning he sought his Beloved, from Whom the wall of the flesh alone parted him. It was, moreover, a defence unto him in his labours, while in all that he did, distrusting his own working, and relying on the heavenly goodness, he cast all his care upon the Lord in earnest prayer.

He would confidently affirm that the grace of prayerfulness should be more desired than all others by the religious man, and,—believing that without it no good could be wrought in the service of God,—he would stir up his Brethren unto zeal therefor by all means that he could. For, whether walking or sitting, within doors or without, in toil or at leisure, he was so absorbed in prayer as that he seemed to have devoted thereunto not

only his whole heart and body, but also his whole labour and time.

Spiritual contemplation

2. Nor was he ever wont to pass over heedlessly any spiritual visitation. When it came unto him, he followed after it, and, for as long as the Lord granted it unto him, he rejoiced in its proffered sweetness. If, while absorbed in thought on a journey, he felt some breathings of the divine Spirit, he would let his companions go on before, and would himself stay his steps, and turn the new inspiration into fruitfulness, not receiving the grace in vain. Ofttimes he was rapt in such ecstasies of contemplation as that he was carried out of himself, and, while perceiving things beyond mortal sense, knew naught of what was happening in the outer world around him.

Thus, when he was passing on a time through Borgo San Sepolcro, a very populous town, riding on an ass because of his bodily weakness, he met crowds of folk that ran together out of devotion unto him. Yet albeit they touched him, and delayed his progress, crowding round him and in many ways pressing upon him, he seemed as one that felt naught, and, even as though he had been a dead body, perceived no whit what was being done around him. Accordingly, when they had long since passed through the town and left the crowds behind them, and had come unto a certain leper settlement, that contemplator of heavenly things, like one returning from another world, anxiously enquired when they would draw nigh unto Borgo. For his mind, intent on heavenly glories, had not perceived the changes of place and time, nor of the folk that met them.

Love of solitude

And that this oft befell him, the repeated experience of his companions attested.

3. Moreover,—as he had experienced in prayer that the longed-for presence of the Holy Spirit vouchsafed itself by so much the more intimately unto suppliants as it found them removed from the noise of worldlings,—he would seek lonely places, going to pray by night in solitudes and in deserted churches. There ofttimes he endured dire assaults from demons, who, struggling with him in perceptible form, strove to disturb him in his exercise of prayer. But he, furnished with heavenly arms, the more desperate his enemies' attack, was rendered by so much the more strong in might and fervent in prayer, saying with confidence unto Christ: "Hide me under the shadow of Thy wings, from the wicked that oppress me." But unto the demons he would say: "Do unto me aught that ye can, evil and false spirits. For ye have no power, save that which is granted you from the divine hand, and here am I, ready to bear with all gladness all things whatsoever that has decreed to inflict upon me." Then the proud demons, not able to brook this constancy of mind, retreated in confusion.

4. But the man of God, remaining alone and at peace, filled the woods with his sighing, bedewed the ground with his tears, and beat his breast with his hands, and, like one who hath gained a secret and hidden thing, spake familiarly with his Lord. There he made answer unto his Judge, there he made supplication unto his Father, there he held converse with his Friend, there too he was at times heard by the Brethren, who out

of filial piety watched him, to invoke the divine mercy for sinners with cries and wailings, yea, and to lament aloud as though the Lord's Passion were set before his eyes. There he was beheld praying by night, his hands stretched out after the manner of a Cross, his whole body uplifted from the earth, and wrapt in a shining cloud, as though the wondrous illumination of the body were a witness unto the wondrous enlightenment of his mind. There, moreover, as is attested by sure signs, the unknown and hidden things of the divine wisdom were laid bare unto him, albeit he did not publish them abroad, save in so far as the love of Christ constrained him, and the profit of his neighbours demanded. For he would say: "For a trifling gain, one may chance to lose a priceless thing, and may easily provoke him that gave it to give no more."

Ecstasies and revelations

When he returned from his private prayers, in the which he became changed almost into another man, he endeavoured with all diligence to make himself like unto others, lest perchance that which was shewn outwardly should by the breath of popular applause depart from the gain within. Whensoever he was rapt on a sudden in public, and visited of the Lord, he would alway make some pretext unto them that stood by, lest the intimate visitations of the Spouse should be published abroad. When that he was praying among the Brethren, he utterly avoided coughings, groanings, hard breathing, and outward gestures, either because he loved secrecy, or because, shutting himself up within himself, he was wholly borne away unto God. Ofttimes he would speak on

Humble reticence after divine visitations

this wise unto his intimate companions: "When the servant of God is visited of God in prayer, he ought to say 'This comfort, O Lord, Thou hast sent from heaven unto me, a sinner and unworthy, and I commit it unto Thy care, for that I feel me to be a thief of Thy treasure.' When, therefore, he returneth from praying, he ought thus to shew himself as a little poor one and a sinner, not as one who hath attained unto any new grace."

5. Once when the man of God was praying in the place of the Little Portion, it chanced that the Bishop of Assisi came to visit him, as was his wont. He at once on entering the place betook him unto the cell wherein the servant of Christ was praying, with more boldness than was seemly, and, knocking at the door, was about to enter; but, as he thrust in his head, and beheld the Saint in prayer, a sudden trembling gat hold of him, his limbs became rigid, and he lost the power of speech; then suddenly he was driven forth by force, by the divine will, and with returning steps was led afar off. All astonied, the Bishop hastened unto the Brethren with all the speed he might, and, God restoring unto him his speech, with his first words he declared his fault.

It befell on a time that the Abbot of the Monastery of Saint Justin in the diocese of Perugia met the servant of Christ. Beholding him, the devout Abbot with all speed alighted from his horse, that he might both do reverence unto the man of God and hold some converse with him concerning his soul's welfare. At length, their

sweet conference over, the Abbot, as he departed, humbly besought that prayers should be offered on his behalf. Unto whom the man dear unto God made answer: "I will pray for thee with goodwill." Accordingly, when the Abbot had departed a little space, the faithful Francis spake unto his companion: "Tarry for me awhile, Brother, for I am minded to pay the debt that I have promised." While, then, he was praying, on a sudden the Abbot felt in his spirit an unwonted glow and a sweetness hitherto unknown, in such wise as that he was carried out of himself in an ecstasy, and wholly loosed from himself and absorbed in God. This lasted but for a brief space, after which he came unto himself again, and recognised the efficacy of the prayer of Saint Francis. Thenceforward he did alway burn with greater love toward the Order, and recounted this event unto many as a miracle.

His intercession

6. The holy man was wont to say the Canonical Hours before God not less reverently than devoutly. For albeit he suffered from infirmities of the eyes, the stomach, spleen, and liver, yet would he never lean against an outer or inner wall, while he was intoning them, but alway said the Hours standing upright, and without his hood, not letting his eyes roam about, nor cutting short his words. If he were on a journey, he would, when the time came, stay his steps, nor would he omit this reverent and holy habit for any storm of rain. For he would say: "If the body needeth quiet when it partaketh of the bread that, like itself, shall become food for worms, with how much peace and calm doth it behove the soul to receive the Bread of Life?" Grievously

Reverence and recollection in prayer

did he consider himself to have stumbled if ever, while giving himself unto prayer, his mind was led astray of empty fantasies. When anything of the like happened, he made mention thereof in confession, that he might forthwith atone for it. This earnestness he had so turned into an habit that right seldom did he suffer from flies of this sort.

One Lent, he had made a little vase, that he might fill up his spare moments, and they not be utterly wasted. But forasmuch as while saying Tierce this came into his memory and a little distracted his mind, he, moved by the fervour of his spirit, burnt the little vase in the fire, saying: "I will sacrifice it unto the Lord, Whose sacrifice it hath hindered." It was his wont to say the Psalms with mind and spirit as attent as though he saw God present before his eyes, and when the Name of the Lord occurred therein, he seemed to refresh his very lips with the savour of its sweetness. He was fain that that same Name of the Lord, not alone when it was meditated upon, but also when it was uttered or written, should be honoured with an especial reverence, and at times he would prevail on the Brethren to collect all papers with writing upon them, wheresoever they might find them, and to lay them in some seemly place, lest perchance that sacred Name might happen to be written thereon, and so trodden underfoot. And when he uttered or heard the Name of Jesus, he was filled with an inward rejoicing, and seemed all transfigured outwardly, as though some honey-sweet taste had soothed his palate, or some melodious sound his ear.

7. Now three years before his death it befell that he was minded, at the town of Greccio, to

The Presepio at Greccio

celebrate the memory of the Birth of the Child Jesus, with all the added solemnity that he might, for the kindling of devotion. That this might not seem an innovation, he sought and obtained license from the Supreme Pontiff, and then made ready a manger, and bade hay, together with an ox and an ass, be brought unto the spot. The Brethren were called together, the folk assembled, the wood echoed with their voices, and that august night was made radiant and solemn with many bright lights, and with tuneful and sonorous praises. The man of God, filled with tender love, stood before the manger, bathed in tears, and overflowing with joy. Solemn Masses were celebrated over the manger, Francis, the Levite of Christ, chanting the Holy Gospel. Then he preached unto the folk standing round of the Birth of the King in poverty, calling Him, when he wished to name Him, the Child of Bethlehem, by reason of his tender love for Him. A certain knight, valorous and true, Messer John of Greccio, who for the love of Christ had left the secular army, and was bound by closest friendship unto the man of God, declared that he beheld a little Child right fair to see sleeping in that manger, Who seemed to be awakened from sleep when the blessed Father Francis embraced Him in both arms. This vision of the devout knight is rendered worthy of belief, not alone through the holiness of him that beheld it, but is also confirmed by the truth that it set forth, and withal proven by the miracles that followed it. For the ensample of Francis, if meditated upon by the world, must needs stir up sluggish hearts unto the faith of Christ, and the

A blessing therefrom

A hay that was kept back from the manger by the folk proved a marvellous remedy for sick beasts, and a prophylactic against divers other plagues, God magnifying by all means His servant, and making manifest by clear and miraculous portents the efficacy of his holy prayers.

CHAPTER XI

OF HIS UNDERSTANDING OF THE SCRIPTURES, AND OF HIS SPIRIT OF PROPHECY

The Holy Scriptures

1. UNTO such a tranquillity of mind had his unwearied zeal for prayer and continuous practice of virtue brought the man of God that—albeit he had no instruction or learning in the sacred writings—yet, illumined by the beams of eternal light, he searched the deep things of the Scriptures with marvellous intellectual discernment. For his genius, pure from all stain, penetrated into the hidden places of the mysteries, and, where the learning of a theologian tarrieth without, the feelings of the lover led him in. At times he would read in the sacred books, and whatsoever had once been presented unto his mind became indelibly imprinted on his memory, for it was not in vain that he comprehended by hearing and by an attent mind that which he ever meditated upon with the love of an unceasing devotion. Once when the Brethren asked whether it were his will that the clerks that had been already received into the Order should devote themselves unto the study of Holy Scripture, he made answer: "It is indeed my will, yet for so long alone as they follow the example of Christ, Who, we read, prayed more than He read, and for so long as they do not lose their zeal for prayer, nor

A theologian taught of him

study only that they may know how they ought to speak; rather let them study that they may be doers of the word, and, when they have done it, may set forth unto others what they too should do. I am fain, (saith he), that my Brethren should be learners of the Gospel, and thus make progress in knowledge of the truth, that they should grow in the purity of guilelessness, so that they sever not the harmlessness of the dove from the wisdom of the serpent, which twain the greatest Teacher hath joined together with His blessed mouth."

2. Being asked at Siena by a certain devout man, a doctor of sacred theology, concerning sundry problems hard of understanding, he laid bare the hidden things of the divine wisdom with such luminous exposition that that learned man was mightily astonied, and exclaimed in amazement: "Verily, the theology of this holy Father, borne aloft by purity and meditation as though by wings, is as a flying eagle, while our learning creepeth on its belly on the earth." For, albeit he were unskilled in speech, yet, full of learning, he unravelled the knots of problems, and the thing that was hid he brought forth into the light. Nor was it unfitting that the holy man should receive from God an understanding of the Scriptures, seeing that by the imitation of Christ he fulfilled and set forth in his deeds their perfect truth, and by the abundant anointing of the Holy Spirit had within him, in his own heart, an instructor therein.

3. So mightily did the spirit of prophecy shine forth in him that he both foreknew what was to

The Crusaders admonished

come, and beheld the secrets of men's hearts, and perceived absent things as though they were present, and in wondrous wise manifested his own presence unto them that were absent. For on a time when the Christian army was besieging Damietta, the man of God was present, fortified not by arms but by faith. When on the day of battle the Christians were preparing them for the conflict, and the servant of Christ heard thereof, he groaned bitterly, and said unto his companion: "If they essay to join battle, the Lord hath shewn me that it will not fare well with the Christians; but, if I say this, I shall be accounted a fool; if I keep silence, I shall not escape the reproaches of my conscience. What, then, dost thou advise?" His companion replied: "Brother, do thou esteem it but a light thing to be judged of men, for that thou dost not now make a beginning of being accounted a fool. Unburden thy conscience, and fear God rather than men." Hearing this, the herald of Christ hastened forth, and approached the Christians with salutary warnings, forbidding the battle, and prophesying its issue. The truth was unto them as a vain tale, they hardened their hearts and would not turn back. They went into the field, they joined battle, they fought, and the entire Christian host was put to the rout, thus winning shame, not triumph, as the ending of the warfare. In this dread defeat, the Christian host was so diminished that there were about six thousand slain or captured. Thereby was it clearly made manifest that the wisdom of the poor man, Francis, had not been meet for contempt, for the mind of a righteous man is some-

time wont to tell him more than seven watchmen, that sit above in an high tower.

The Knight of Celano

4. At another time, when he was returned from beyond seas, and had come unto Celano to preach, a certain Knight with humble devoutness and great importunity invited him to dine with him. He came accordingly unto the house of the Knight, and the whole household rejoiced over the coming of their poor guests. Before they partook of the meal, Francis, as he was wont, stood with eyes uplift to heaven, with a devout mind offering unto God prayers and praises. His prayer ended, he called aside his kindly host in familiar wise, and thus addressed him: "Lo, my brother and host, yielding unto thine importunity I have come unto thy house to eat. Do thou now yield speedily unto my exhortations, forasmuch as thou shalt eat not here, but elsewhere. Confess now thy sins, and be contrite with the grief of a true repentance, nor let aught abide in thee that thou dost not lay bare in sincere confession. The Lord will reward thee this day for that thou hast received His poor with such devoutness." The Knight yielded forthwith unto the words of the holy man, unto whose companion he disclosed all his sins in confession, and then set his house in order, and prepared himself, in so far as he might, for death. At length they sat down to table, and, while the rest were beginning to eat, the host on a sudden gave up the ghost, carried off by a sudden death according unto the word of the man of God. And thus it befell, by the merits of his gracious hospitality, that, according unto the Word of

truth, "He that receiveth a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward": for by the prophetic prediction of the holy man that devout Knight made himself ready against the sudden onset of death, inasmuch as, fortified by the weapons of penitence, he was able to escape eternal condemnation and enter into the everlasting tabernacles.

The wicked Prebendary

5. Once on a time, while the holy man was lying sick at Rieti, a prebendary, Gideon by name, a man unstable and worldly, that had been stricken with a sore disease and was lying in his bed, was brought unto him, and with tears besought him—as did the bystanders—that he would make over him the sign of the Cross. Unto him he said: "Since aforetime thou wert living after the lusts of the flesh, not fearing the judgements of God, how can I sign thee with the Cross? Howbeit, for the sake of the devout prayers of these that plead for thee, I will make over thee the sign of the Cross in the name of the Lord. Yet be thou well assured that a worse thing will befall thee if, when thou hast been set free, thou shalt return unto thy vomit. For the sin of ingratitude ever bringeth with it worse evils than were suffered afore." Then, when the sign of the Cross was made over him, at once he that had lain paralysed rose up whole, and, breaking forth into God's praises, "I," saith he, "am set free!" His bones cracked within him, in the hearing of many, even as when dry wood is broken by the hand. Yet when but a short time had passed by, he forgat God, and again yielded his body unto unchastity. When one evening he had supped in the house of a certain Canon, and was sleeping there that night, on a

A devout lady blessed

sudden the roof of the house fell in above them all. But while the rest escaped death, that wretched man alone was overtaken and cut off. Thus by a righteous judgement of God the last state of that man was worse than the first, by reason of his sin of ingratitude, and contempt of God, since it had behoved him to be grateful for the pardon that he had gained, and since a crime when repeated is twofold an offence.

6. On another time, a devout woman of noble birth came unto the holy man to unfold her grief unto him and to ask a remedy. Now she had a right cruel husband, from whom she suffered opposition in the service of Christ, wherefore she besought the holy man that he would pray for him that God would deign to soften his heart with His own mercy. Hearing this, Francis said unto her, "Go in peace, and confidently await from thine husband the comfort that he shall speedily afford thee." And he added: "Say unto him from God and from me that now is the day of mercy, hereafter that of justice." When he had blessed her, the woman returned, found her husband, and declared what had been spoken. Then the Holy Spirit fell upon him and changed him into a new man, making him in all gentleness reply thus: "Lady, let us serve the Lord, and save our souls." Then by the persuasions of his devout wife for many years they lived a life of continence, and both on the same day departed unto the Lord. Of a truth, we must marvel at the might of the spirit of prophecy that was found in the man of God, through the which he restored unto withered limbs their power, and impressed on hard

hearts godliness; albeit no less must we be astonied at the clear perception of that spirit, whereby he so foreknew the issue of future events that he could search even the secret things of men's consciences, having obtained, like another Elisha, a double portion of the spirit of Elias.

His knowledge of the future

7. Once when at Siena he had decisively foretold unto a certain friend some events that should come to pass, that learned man—of whom mention hath been made above as to his conferring with him about the Scriptures—heard thereof, and, doubting, asked the holy Father whether he had said the things that he had heard from the narration of that other. Then Francis not only declared that he had so spoken, but also foretold by prophecy that man's own end, who was thus asking concerning another. And that he might the more surely impress this on his heart, he revealed unto him a certain hidden scruple of his conscience, which that man had never laid bare unto any living, and by thus marvellously revealing the same he explained it, and by his salutary counsels laid it low. To confirm the truth of all this, it befell that that same devout man came unto his end at the last in the manner foretold him by the servant of Christ.

8. Once, moreover, when he was returning from beyond sea, with Brother Leonard of Assisi as his companion, it chanced that, worn out and weary as he was, he was riding on an ass. His companion, as he followed him,—himself no little wearied,—began to say within himself, with a touch of human weakness: "This man's family was not of equal standing with mine own. And

and of men's hearts

now, look you, he rideth, and I on foot lead his ass." Even as he thus reasoned, the holy man forthwith dismounted from the ass, saying: "It is not fitting, Brother, that I should ride, and thou walk afoot, for that in the world thou wert of nobler birth and more standing than I." Then the Brother was dumb with amazement, and blushed for shame, and, perceiving his fault, fell at the other's feet, which he bedewed with tears, and laid bare what had been his thought, and implored pardon.

9. A certain Brother, devoted unto God, and unto the servant of Christ, oft meditated in his heart how that one must be meet for the divine grace whom the holy man embraced with intimate friendship, yet nevertheless he thought himself considered of God as a stranger, outside the number of the elect. Being, then, ofttimes harassed by the oncoming of such thoughts, he ardently desired the intimate friendship of the man of God, yet did not lay bare unto any the secret of his heart; him the kindly Father called gently unto him, and thus addressed: "Let no thoughts disturb thee, my son, for I hold thee most dear, and amongst those most especially dear unto me I do gladly bestow upon thee the gift of my friendship and my love." Thereat the Brother marvelled, and from being devout became ever more devout, and not only increased in love of the holy man, but was also laden, through the gift of the grace of the Holy Spirit, with greater endowments.

Now while Francis was sojourning on Mount Alverna, secluded in his cell, one of his companions did mightily desire to possess some of the

words of the Lord written by his hand, and with brief notes thereupon. For, having it, he believed that he might escape a grievous temptation, not of the flesh, but of the spirit, by the which he was distressed, or assuredly might be enabled to bear it more easily. While he was pining with such a desire, he suffered torments within, being overcome with shamefastness, nor daring to lay the matter before his venerated Father. But though man told it not unto him, the Spirit revealed it. For he bade the Brother aforesaid bring unto him ink and parchment, and according unto the desire of the Brother he wrote with his own hand the praises of the Lord thereon, and finally, a blessing for him, saying: "Take unto thyself this parchment, and keep it with care until the day of thy death.' The Brother received the gift he had so desired, and forthwith that temptation utterly departed from him. The writing was preserved, and forasmuch as in later days it wrought miracles, it became a witness unto the virtues of Francis.

He writeth his Benediction

10. Now there was a Brother eminent, in so far as outward appearance went, for his sanctity, distinguished in his converse, yet somewhat singular in bearing. Devoting his whole time unto prayer, he observed silence with such rigour as that he was wont to make his confession not by words, but by nods. Now it chanced that the holy Father came unto that place and beheld the Brother, and spake concerning him with the other Brethren. When they all praised and glorified him, the man of God made answer: "Beware, Brethren, lest ye praise unto me in him the deceitful semblances of the devil. Know in truth that this is a temptation of

Discernment of false seeming, and

the devil, and a deceitful snare." The Brethren were loth to believe this, judging it almost impossible that the devices of a false seeming should adorn themselves with so many evidences of perfection. Yet of a truth, on his leaving the Religion not many days after, it was manifestly seen with what clearness of inward vision the man of God had discerned the secrets of his heart.

After this manner he would predict with irrefragable truth the fall of many who seemed to stand, but also the conversion unto Christ of many who were turned aside, so that he seemed to have approached unto the mirror of eternal light to gaze therein, and by its wondrous radiance the sight of his mind surely perceived things that were absent in bodily form, even as though they were present.

11. Thus, on a time when his Vicar was holding a Chapter, and he himself was in his cell praying, he was a mediator between the Brethren and God. For when one of them, sheltering himself under some cloak of defence, would not yield himself up unto discipline, the holy man beheld this in spirit, and called one of the Brethren, and said unto him: "I saw, Brother, the devil sitting upon the back of that disobedient Brother, holding his neck gripped, for he, driven by such a master, spurning the bridle of obedience, had given the reins unto his instincts. And when I besought God for the Brother, at once the devil withdrew in confusion. Go then and bid the Brother yield his neck with all speed unto the yoke of holy obedience." The Brother, exhorted by the messenger, forthwith turned unto God, and humbly threw himself at the feet of the Vicar.

12. Again, it befell on a time that two Brethren had come from afar unto the hermitage of Greccio, that they might behold the man of God, and carry away with them his blessing, the which they had long time coveted. They came and found him not, for that he had returned from the common dwelling-place unto his cell, wherefore they were departing disconsolately. Lo, as they were withdrawing, Francis, who could have known naught by human perception of their arrival or departure, contrary unto his wont came forth of his cell, called after them, and, according unto their desire, made the sign of the Cross over them, blessing them in the name of Christ.

of secret desires, and sins

13. Once two Brethren were come from Terra di Lavoro, the elder of whom had given some offence unto the younger. But when they came before the Father, he asked of the younger how the Brother that was his companion had behaved toward him on the way. On his making answer: "Well enough," he responded: "Beware, Brother, that thou lie not under pretext of humility, for I know, I know,—do thou wait a while and thou shalt see." The Brother was mightily astonied in what wise he had perceived in spirit what had taken place so far off. Accordingly, not many days after, he that had given the offence unto the Brother, spurning the Religion, went out utterly, not seeking pardon from the Father, nor submitting unto the discipline of correction that was his due. Thus two things were made manifest at the same time in the ruin of this one man, to wit, the justice of the divine judgments, and the clear vision of the spirit of prophecy.

David, Peter, and Francis

14. In what wise Francis showed himself present unto them that were absent, by the working of the divine power, is clearly apparent from what hath been afore related, if we recall unto mind how in his absence he appeared unto the Brethren as one transfigured, in a chariot of fire, and how at the Chapter of Arles he shewed himself with arms outstretched after the likeness of a Cross. This we must believe to have been wrought by the divine ruling, that by the miraculous appearance of his bodily presence it might be abundantly evident how that his spirit was present in and penetrated by the light of the eternal wisdom, which is more moving than any motion, and goeth through all things by reason of her pureness, and entering into holy souls maketh them friends of God, and prophets. For the most exalted Teacher is wont to reveal His mysteries unto the babes and simple, as was first seen in David, the most lofty of the Prophets, and afterward in the Prince of the Apostles, Peter, and lastly in Francis, the little poor one of Christ. For these, albeit they were simple, and unskilled in letters, were made famous by the teaching of the Holy Spirit; the first a shepherd, to feed the flock of the Synagogue that was brought forth out of Egypt; the second a fisher, to fill the great net of the Church with a multitude of believers; the last a merchantman, to buy the pearl of Gospel life, when that he had sold and disposed of all things for the sake of Christ.

CHAPTER XII

OF THE EFFICACY OF HIS PREACHING, AND OF HIS GIFT OF HEALING

Saint Francis doubteth whether to give himself

1. THE truly faithful servant and minister of Christ, Francis, that he might faithfully and perfectly fulfil all things, strove most chiefly to exercise those virtues that he knew, by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, were most pleasing unto his God. Wherefore it came to pass that he fell into great striving with himself by reason of a doubt, the which that he might end,—on his return after many days of prayer,—he set before the Brethren that were his intimates. "What," saith he, "do ye counsel, Brethren, what do ye commend? Shall I devote myself unto prayer, or I shall go about preaching? Of a truth, I that am little, and simple, and rude in speech have received more grace of prayer than of speaking. Now in prayer, there seemeth to be the gain and heaping up of graces, in preaching, a certain giving out of the gifts received from heaven; in prayer, again, a cleansing of the inward feelings, and an union with the one, true, and highest good, together with a strengthening of virtue; in preaching, the spiritual feet wax dusty, and many things distract a man, and discipline is relaxed. Finally, in prayer, we speak with God and hear Him, and live as it were the life of Angels, while we converse with Angels;

to prayer or to preaching

in preaching, we must needs practise much condescension toward men and living among them as fellow-men must think, see, say, and hear such things as pertain unto men. Yet one thing is there to set against these, the which in God's sight would seem to weigh more than they all, to wit, that the only-begotten Son of God, Who is the highest wisdom, left His Father's bosom for the salvation of souls, that, instructing the world by His ensample, He might preach the word of salvation unto men, whom He both redeemed at the cost of His sacred Blood, and cleansed in a laver and gave them to drink, keeping back naught of Himself, but for our salvation freely bestowing all. And forasmuch as we ought to do all things after the pattern of those things that was shewn us in Him as on the lofty mount, it seemeth that it might be more acceptable unto God that, laying aside leisure, I should go forth unto the work." And albeit for many days he pondered over such sayings with the Brethren, he could not of a surety discern whether of the twain he should choose as more truly pleasing unto Christ. For albeit he had known many wondrous things through the spirit of prophecy, he was not able thereby to resolve this question clearly, the providence of God better ordaining, so that the merit of preaching might be made evident by an heavenly oracle, and the humility of Christ's servant be kept intact.

2. He, true Brother Minor, was not ashamed to ask little things from those less than himself, albeit he had learnt great things from the greatest Teacher. For with an especial zeal he was wont to enquire after what way and manner of life he

Counsel of Saint Clare and of Silvester

might most perfectly serve God according unto His will. This was his highest philosophy, this his highest desire, so long as he lived, so that he would enquire of wise and simple, of perfect and imperfect, of young and old, in what wise he might with most holiness attain unto the summit of perfection. Therefore, calling unto him twain of the Brethren, he sent them unto Brother Silvester,—he that had seen the Cross proceeding from his mouth, and was at that time giving himself up unto continuous prayer in the mountain above Assisi,—that he might seek an answer from God concerning this doubt, and announce it unto him from the Lord. This same bidding he laid upon the holy virgin Clare, that through some of the purer and simpler of the virgins that were living under her rule, yea, and through her own prayers united with those of the other Sisters, she might ascertain the will of the Lord touching this matter. The reverend priest and the virgin vowed unto God were marvellously in agreement concerning this, the Holy Spirit revealing it unto them, to wit, that it was the divine will that the herald of Christ should go forth to preach. When, therefore, the Brethren returned, and, according unto what they had heard, pointed out the will of God, Francis forthwith rose and girded himself, and without any delay set forth on his journey. And with such fervour did he go, to fulfil the divine behest, and with such speed did he hasten on his way, that he seemed—the hand of the Lord being upon him—to have put on new power from heaven.

3. When he drew nigh unto Bevagna he came

Sermon to the birds

unto a spot wherein a great multitude of birds of divers species were gathered together. When the holy man of God perceived them, he ran with all speed unto the place and greeted them as if they shared in human understanding. They on their part all awaited him and turned toward him, those that were perched on bushes bending their heads as he drew nigh them, and looking on him in unwonted wise, while he came right among them, and diligently exhorted them all to hear the word of God, saying: "My brothers the birds, much ought ye to praise your Creator, Who hath clothed you with feathers and given you wings to fly, and hath made over unto you the pure air, and careth for you without your taking thought for yourselves." While he was speaking unto them these and other like words, the little birds—behaving themselves in wondrous wise—began to stretch their necks, to spread their wings, to open their beaks, and to look intently on him. He, with wondrous fervour of spirit, passed in and out among them, touching them with his habit, nor did one of them move from the spot until he had made the sign of the Cross over them and given them leave; then, with the blessing of the man of God, they all flew away together. All these things were witnessed by his companions that stood awaiting him by the way. Returning unto them, the simple and holy man began to blame himself for neglect in that he had not afore then preached unto the birds.

4. Thence, while going among the neighbouring places to preach, he came unto a town named Alviano, where, when the folk were gathered

together and silence had been bidden, he could yet scarce be heard by reason of the swallows that were there building their nests, and twittering with shrill cries. The man of God, in the hearing of all, addressed them, and said: "My sisters the swallows, 'tis now time that I too should speak, seeing that until now ye have said your say. Hearken unto the word of God, and keep silence, until the preaching of the Lord be ended." Then they, as though gifted with understanding, on a sudden fell silent, nor moved from the spot until the whole preaching was finished. All they that saw it were filled with amazement, and glorified God. The report of this marvel spread on all sides, and kindled in many reverence for the Saint, and devotion unto the faith.

The swallows keep silence

5. Again, in the city of Parma, a scholar of good disposition that with his comrades was busily intent on study, was troubled by the importunate twittering of a certain swallow, and began to say unto his comrades: "This swallow is one of those that troubled the man of God, Francis, on a time when he was preaching, until he bade them be silent." Then, turning unto the swallow, with all confidence he said: "In the name of Francis, the servant of God, I bid thee come hither to me forthwith, and keep silence." Then the bird, hearing the name Francis, like one instructed by the teaching of the man of God, at once fell silent, and withal gave herself up into his hands as though into safe keeping. The scholar, in amazement, forthwith set her free again, and heard her twittering no more.

On the seashore

6. On another time, when the servant of God was preaching on the seashore at Gaëta, crowds gathered about him out of devotion, that they might touch him; whereupon the servant of Christ, shrinking from such homage of the folk, leapt alone into a little boat that was lying by the beach. And the boat, as though impelled by a reasoning power from within, without any rowing put out unto some distance from land, while all beheld it and marvelled. But when it was withdrawn some little distance into deep water, it stayed motionless among the waves, while the holy man preached unto the waiting crowds upon the shore. When the discourse was ended, and the miracle perceived, and his blessing given, the throng gave place, in order that they might no more disturb him, and the little boat of its own guidance put in again unto land.

Who then could be of so obstinate and wicked mind as to despise the preaching of Francis, by whose wondrous might it came to pass that not only creatures lacking reason were amenable unto his correction, but that even lifeless objects, as though they had life, ministered unto him while preaching?

7. Thus there was ever present with His servant Francis, in whatsoever he did, He Who had anointed him and sent him, the Spirit of the Lord, yea, and Christ Himself, Who is the power of God and the wisdom of God, that he might abound in words of healthful teaching and shine in the light of miracles of great power. For his speech was as a burning fire, penetrating the secrets of the heart, and he filled the minds of all

with amazement, since he set forth no adornments of men's invention, but savoured of the breath of divine revelation. Thus on a time, when he was about to preach in the presence of the Pope and the Cardinals, at the suggestion of the lord Bishop of Ostia he had committed unto memory a certain carefully prepared sermon, and, standing in the midst to set forth the words of edification, found that he had so utterly forgotten it all as that he knew not how to speak a word thereof. When with fruitful humility he had confessed this, he set himself to invoke the grace of the Holy Spirit, and forthwith began to pour forth words so mighty in effect, and of such wondrous power to move the minds of those illustrious men unto repentance, as that it was manifestly seen that it was not himself that spake, but the Spirit of the Lord.

A sermon forgotten

8. And forasmuch as he did himself first practise that which he afterward preached unto others, he feared none that might blame him, but did most faithfully preach the truth. It was not his way to smooth over the faults of any, but to smite them, nor to flatter the life of sinners, but rather to aim at it with stern reproofs. Unto great and small alike he spake with the same firm spirit, and he would as joyfully address him unto few as unto many. Folk of every age and either sex hastened to see and to hear this man, newly given unto the world from heaven. He, indeed, as he went throughout divers districts, preached the Gospel with fervour, the Lord working with him and confirming the word with signs following. For in the power of His Name Francis, the

Divers miracles

herald of the truth, did cast forth demons, heal the sick, and, what is more, by the might of his preaching did soften and make penitent hard hearts, restoring health unto body and mind at the same time, even as the instances of his working to be cited below give proof.

9. In the city of Toscanella, he was devoutly entertained as guest by a certain Knight, whose only son was crippled from birth; at his own urgent entreaty, he raised him with his hands, and so suddenly made him whole that, in the sight of all, his limbs were all forthwith strengthened, and the boy, made whole and strong, rose up at once, walking and leaping and praising God.

In the city of Narni, when, at the entreaty of the Bishop, he had made the sign of the Cross from head to foot over a certain paralytic who had lost the use of all his limbs, he restored him perfectly unto health.

In the diocese of Rieti, a boy that from the age of four had been so swollen that he could in no wise look on his own legs, was brought unto him by his mother with tears, and forthwith, when the Saint touched him with his holy hands, was healed.

In the city of Orte, a boy was so deformed that his head rested on his feet, and some of his bones were broken; he, when Francis at the tearful entreaties of his parents had made the sign of the Cross over him, on a sudden stood upright, and was from that moment unloosed.

10. A certain woman in the city of Gubbio had both her hands so withered and paralysed

that she could do no work with them; she, when Francis had made the sign of the Cross over her in the name of the Lord, gained such absolute healing that, returning home forthwith, she prepared with her own hands food for him and for the poor, even as Peter's wife's mother did.

of healing

A girl in the town of Bevagna had lost her sight, but when her eyes had been thrice anointed with his spittle in the name of the Trinity she regained her longed-for sight.

A woman in the city of Narni, stricken with blindness, when the sign of the Cross was made over her by Francis, recovered the sight she yearned for.

A boy in Bologna had one of his eyes so clouded by a spot that he could see nothing therewith, nor find relief by any remedy; howbeit when the servant of the Lord had made the sign of the Cross over him from head to foot, he recovered his sight perfectly, insomuch as that, entering the Order of Brothers Minor thereafter, he affirmed that he saw far better with the eye that aforetime was clouded than with the eye that had been alway sound.

In the town of San Gemini, the servant of God was received as guest by a certain devout man whose wife was tormented by a demon; after he had prayed, he commanded the demon on obedience to go out from her, and by the divine power put him so instantly to flight as that it became clearly evident that the audacity of demons availeth not to resist the power of holy obedience.

In Città di Castello, a raging and evil spirit

Divers miracles

possessed a woman; he, charged on obedience by the holy man, went out in wrath, leaving the woman that had been possessed free alike in mind and body.

11. One of the Brethren was afflicted with such an horrible disease as that it was asserted of many to be rather a tormenting from demons than a natural sickness. For ofttimes he was quite dashed down on the ground, and wallowed foaming, with his limbs now drawn up, now stretched forth, now folded, now twisted, now become rigid and fixed. At times he was quite stretched out and stiff, and with his feet on a level with his head, would be raised into the air, and would then fall back again in dreadful fashion. The servant of Christ, full of compassion, pitied him in his so lamentable and incurable sickness, and sent unto him a morsel of the bread wherefrom he had been eating. When the sick man had tasted the bread, he received such power as that never thenceforward did he suffer trouble from that sickness.

In the province of Arezzo, a woman for many days had laboured in childbirth, and was now nigh unto death; she was utterly despairing of her life, and no resource was left her but in God. Now the servant of Christ, by reason of his bodily weakness, had travelled on horseback through those regions, and it chanced that the beast was led back through the village wherein the woman lay suffering. The men of the place, seeing the horse whereon the holy man had sat, took off the bridle, that they might lay it on the woman, and at the marvellous touch thereof all danger was

banished, and the woman forthwith was delivered in safety.

of healing

A certain man of Città della Pieve, devout and one that feared God, had by him a cord wherewith the holy Father had been girt. Whereas a great number of men and women in that city were afflicted by divers diseases, he went among the homes of them that were sick, and, dipping the cord in water, gave drink therefrom unto the sufferers, and thus by this means very many were cured. Moreover, the sick who tasted of bread touched by the man of God, by the efficacy of the divine power obtained right speedily healing cures.

12. Forasmuch as the preaching of the herald of Christ was illuminated by these and many other portents and miracles, the words that fell from him were listened for as eagerly as though it were an Angel of the Lord speaking. For there was in him a surpassing excellence of the virtues, the spirit of prophecy, power of miracles, an eloquence in preaching inspired from heaven, the submission unto him of the creatures that lack reason, a mighty moving of men's hearts at the hearing of his words, a learning given him of the Holy Spirit beyond all human teaching, licence to preach granted him by the supreme Pontiff as the result of a revelation, yea, and the Rule too, wherein the manner of the preaching was set forth, confirmed by that same Vicar of Christ, and, finally, the signs of the King Most High imprinted on his body after the manner of a seal; these gave unanswerable evidence unto the whole world, as it were by ten witnesses, that Francis the

Witnesses unto him

herald of Christ was worthy of reverence in his ministry, was of authority in his teaching, and was to be marvelled at in his saintliness, and that through these virtues he had preached the Gospel of Christ like one that was indeed a messenger of God.

CHAPTER XIII

OF THE SACRED STIGMATA

1. It was the custom of that angelic man, Francis, never to be slothful in good, but rather, like the heavenly spirits on Jacob's ladder, to be ever ascending toward God, or stooping toward his neighbour. For he had learnt so wisely to apportion the time granted unto him for merit that one part thereof he would spend in labouring for the profit of his neighbours, the other he would devote unto the peaceful ecstasies of contemplation. Wherefore, when according unto the demands of time and place he had stooped to secure the salvation of others, he would leave behind the disturbances of throngs, and seek a hidden solitude and a place for silence, wherein, giving himself up more freely unto the Lord, he might brush off any dust that was clinging unto him from his converse with men. Accordingly, two years before he yielded his spirit unto heaven, the divine counsel leading him, he was brought after many and varied toils unto an high mountain apart, that is called Mount Alverna. When, according unto his wont he began to keep a Lent there, fasting, in honour of Saint Michael Archangel, he was filled unto overflowing, and as never before, with the sweetness of heavenly contemplation, and was kindled with a yet more burning flame of heavenly longings, and began to feel the gifts of the divine

Mount La Verna

An oracle of God's Will

bestowal heaped upon him. He was borne into the heights, not like a curious examiner of the divine majesty that is weighed down by the glory thereof, but even as a faithful and wise servant, searching out the will of God, unto Whom it was ever his fervent and chief desire to conform himself in every way.

2. Thus by the divine oracle it was instilled into his mind that by opening of the Book of the Gospels it should be revealed unto him of Christ what would be most pleasing unto God in him and from him. Wherefore, having first prayed very devoutly, he took the holy Book of the Gospels from the altar, and made it be opened, in the name of the Holy Trinity, by his companion, a man devoted unto God, and holy. As in the threefold opening of the Book, the Lord's Passion was each time discovered, Francis, full of the Spirit of God, verily understood that, like as he had imitated Christ in the deeds of his life, so it behoved him to be made like unto Him in the trials and sufferings of His Passion before that he should depart from this world. And, albeit by reason of the great austerity of his past life, and continual sustaining of the Lord's Cross, he was now frail in body, he was no whit afeared, but was the more valorously inspired to endure a martyrdom. For in him the all-powerful kindling of love of the good Jesu had increased into coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame, so that many waters could not quench his love, so strong it was.

3. When, therefore, by seraphic glow of longing he had been uplifted toward God, and by his

Vision of the Seraph

sweet compassion had been transformed into the likeness of Him Who of His exceeding love endured to be crucified,—on a certain morning about the Feast of the Exaltation of Holy Cross, while he was praying on the side of the mountain, he beheld a Seraph having six wings, flaming and resplendent, coming down from the heights of heaven. When in his flight most swift he had reached the space of air nigh the man of God, there appeared betwixt the wings the Figure of a Man crucified, having his hands and feet stretched forth in the shape of a Cross, and fastened unto a Cross. Two wings were raised above His head, twain were spread forth to fly, while twain hid His whole body. Beholding this, Francis was mightily astonied, and joy, mingled with sorrow, filled his heart. He rejoiced at the gracious aspect wherewith he saw Christ, under the guise of the Seraph, regard him, but His crucifixion pierced his soul with a sword of pitying grief. He marvelled exceedingly at the appearance of a vision so unfathomable, knowing that the infirmity of the Passion doth in no wise accord with the immortality of a Seraphic spirit. At length he understood therefrom, the Lord revealing it unto him, that this vision had been thus presented unto his gaze by the divine providence, that the friend of Christ might have foreknowledge that he was to be wholly transformed into the likeness of Christ Crucified, not by martyrdom of body, but by enkindling of heart. Accordingly, as the vision disappeared, it left in his heart a wondrous glow, but on his flesh also it imprinted a no less wondrous likeness of its tokens. For forthwith there

The Sacred Stigmata

began to appear in his hands and feet the marks of the nails, even as he had just beheld them in that Figure of the Crucified. For his hands and feet seemed to be pierced through the midst with nails, the heads of the nails shewing in the palms of the hands, and upper side of the feet, and their points shewing on the other side; the heads of the nails were round and black in the hands and feet, while the points were long, bent, and as it were turned back, being formed of the flesh itself, and protruding therefrom. The right side, moreover, was—as if it had been pierced by a lance—seamed with a ruddy scar, wherefrom ofttimes welled the sacred blood, staining his habit and breeches.

4. Now the servant of Christ perceived that the stigmata thus manifestly imprinted on his flesh could not be hidden from his intimate friends; nevertheless, fearing to make public the holy secret of the Lord, he was set in a great strife of questioning, to wit, whether he should tell that which he had seen, or should keep it silent. Wherefore he called some of the Brethren, and, speaking unto them in general terms, set before them his doubt, and asked their counsel. Then one of the Brethren, Illuminato by name, and illuminated by grace, perceiving that he had beheld some marvellous things, inasmuch as that he seemed almost stricken dumb with amaze, said unto the holy man: "Brother, thou knowest that at times the divine secrets are shewn unto thee, not only for thine own sake, but for the sake of others also. Wherefore, meseemeth thou wouldst have reason to fear lest thou shouldst be judged guilty of hiding thy talent, didst thou keep hidden

that which thou hast received, which same would be profitable unto many." At this speech, the holy man was moved, so that, albeit at other times he was wont to say "My secret to me,"* he did then with much fear narrate in order the vision aforesaid, adding that He who had appeared unto him had said some words the which, so long as he lived, he would never reveal unto any man. Verily we must believe that those utterances of that holy Seraph marvellously appearing on the Cross were so secret that perchance it was not lawful for a man to utter them.

He leaveth the Mount

5. Now after that the true love of Christ had transformed His lover into the same image, and after that he had spent forty days in solitude, as he had determined, when the Feast of Saint Michael Archangel came, this angelic man, Francis, descended from the mountain, bearing with him the likeness of the Crucified, engraven, not on tables of stone or of wood, by the craftsman's hand, but written on his members of flesh by the finger of the Living God. And forasmuch as it is good to keep close the secret of a King, the man that shared this so royal secret did ever hide those sacred signs as best he might. Howbeit, since it pertaineth unto God to reveal the great things that He doth for His glory, the Lord Himself, Who had imprinted those seals upon him in secret, wrought divers miracles openly by means thereof, that the hidden and wondrous power of those stigmata might be demonstrated by the well-known fame of the signs that followed.

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* Isa. xxiv. 16 (marg. A.V.).

The Sacred Stigmata

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A pestilence stayed

prevailed a very grievous plague, the which devoured all oxen and sheep so cruelly that no succour had been of any avail. But a certain man that feared God was warned at night by a vision to go in haste unto an hermitage of the Brethren, and obtain some water that had washed the hands and feet of the servant of God, Francis, who at that time was sojourning there, and to sprinkle it over all the animals. Accordingly, he rose at dawn, and came unto the place, and, having secretly obtained this water from the companions of the holy man, he sprinkled therewith the sheep and oxen that were diseased. Wondrous to relate, so soon as the sprinkling, were it but a drop, fell upon the sick animals as they lay on the ground, they recovered their former strength, and got up forthwith, and, as though they had felt no sickness, hastened unto the pastures! Thus it befell, through the marvellous virtue of that water that had touched the sacred wounds, that the whole plague was at once stayed, and the contagious sickness banished from the flocks and herds.

7. In the neighbourhood of the aforesaid Mount Alverna, before that the holy man had sojourned there, a cloud was wont to arise from the mountain, and a fierce hailstorm to lay waste the fruits of the earth. But after that blessed vision, to the amazement of the inhabitants, the hail ceased, that the excellence of that heavenly apparition and the virtue of the stigmata that were there imprinted might be attested by the very face of the heavens, made calm beyond its wont.

Moreover, it befell one winter season that, by reason of his bodily infirmity, and of the roughness

of the roads, he was riding on a poor man's ass, and was obliged to pass the night under the edge of an overhanging rock, that he might by any means escape the inconveniences of the snow and night that had overtaken them, the which hindered him so that he was not able to reach the place wherein he was to lodge. And when Francis perceived that this man was muttering, sighing, and complaining, and was tossing himself to and fro, like one thinly clad, and unable to sleep by reason of the bitter cold,—he, kindled with the glow of the love divine, touched him with his outstretched hand. Marvellous to relate, so soon as that holy hand that bore the burning of the live coal of the Seraph touched him, his sense of cold was utterly banished, and as great a warmth came upon him within and without as if the flaming breath from the mouth of a furnace had blown upon him. Strengthened thereby in mind and body, he slept more sweetly until the morning among the rocks and snow than he had ever done resting in his own bed, even as he himself did thereafter declare.

A poor man succoured

Wherefore it is proven by sure tokens that those sacred seals were imprinted by the might of Him Who doth by the ministry of Seraphs purify, enlighten, and kindle, seeing that they brought health out of pestilence by driving it forth, and with wondrous efficacy bestowed ease and warmth upon men's bodies, even as after his death was shewn by yet more clear portents that shall be related hereafter in their own place.

8. Francis himself, albeit he strove with great diligence to hide the treasure found in the field, could nevertheless not so conceal it as that some

Testimonies to the Stigmata

should not behold the stigmata in his hands and feet, although he almost always kept his hands covered, and from that time forth wore sandals on his feet. For, while he yet lived, many Brethren saw them, who, albeit they were men worthy of all trust by reason of their especial holiness, did yet for the removal of all doubt swear a solemn oath, laying their hands on thrice-holy things, that so it was, and that they had seen it. Moreover, some Cardinals, during the intimate intercourse that they held with the holy man, beheld them, and these composed truthful praises of the sacred stigmata, in prose, and verse, and antiphons, which they published in his honour, giving their witness alike in word and in writing unto the truth. The Supreme Pontiff, moreover, the lord Alexander, whenas he was preaching in the presence of many Brethren, myself among them, declared that he, during the lifetime of the Saint, had beheld with his own eyes those sacred stigmata. At the time of his death, more than fifty Brethren beheld them, as did Clare, that virgin most devoted unto God, with the rest of her Sisters, and countless seculars, many of whom, as shall be told in its own place, both kissed them with devout emotion, and touched them with their hands, to confirm their witness.

Howbeit, the wound in his side he so heedfully concealed as that during his lifetime none might behold it, save by stealth. Thus one of the Brethren, who was wont solicitously to tend him, —having prevailed on him with holy caution to doff his habit that it might be shaken out,—by looking closely, beheld the wound, and moreover, by laying three fingers upon it with an hasty touch,

learnt the extent thereof alike by sight and by touch. With a like precaution the Brother that was then his Vicar beheld it. And a Brother of wondrous simplicity, that was his companion, while he was rubbing his shoulder-blades by reason of a pain and weakness that he suffered therein, put his hand within his hood, and by an accident let it fall on the sacred wound, inflicting great pain on him. Thenceforward he wore his under-garments so made as that they reached right unto his armpits, to cover the wound in the side. Moreover, the Brethren who washed these, or shook out his habit as occasion demanded, finding them stained with blood, by this manifest token arrived at an assured knowledge of the sacred wound, whose appearance, revealed thereafter at his death, they too, in company with very many others, gazed upon and venerated withal.

The Standard Bearer of Christ

9. Up then, most valiant knight of Christ! Bear the armour of that most invincible Captain, equipped and adorned wherewith thou shalt overcome all enemies. Bear the standard of the King Most High, the which to look upon inspireth all the warriors of the host of God. Bear no less the seal of the Chief Priest, Christ, whereby thy words and deeds shall be deservedly received as blameless and authoritative by all men. For from henceforth, by reason of the marks of the Lord Jesus, which thou dost bear in thy body, let no man trouble thee, nay rather, let whosoever is the servant of Christ be constrained unto deepest devotion and love for thee. For now by these most clear tokens,—proven, not by the two or three witnesses that be enough to establish a

Fulfilment of the Visions

matter, but by a multitude, over and above what was necessary,—the witness of God in thee, and the things wrought through thee worthy of all belief, take from the infidels every pretext or excuse, while that they strengthen believers in faith, uplift them by confidence of hope, and kindle them with the fire of charity.

10. Now, verily, is that first vision fulfilled, which thou sawest, to wit, that thou shouldst become a captain in the warfare of Christ, and shouldst be accoutred with heavenly armour, marked with the sign of the Cross. Now that vision of the Crucified, that, at the outset of thy conversion, pierced thy soul with a sword of pitying sorrow, yea, and the sound of the Voice from the Cross, proceeding as though from the exalted throne of Christ and His hidden place of atonement,—as thou didst declare in thy holy converse,—are shewn to have been true beyond a doubt. Now, too, the Cross that, as thou madest progress in thy conversion, was seen of Brother Silvester marvellously coming forth from thy mouth,—the swords, too, that the holy Pacifico saw laid crosswise upon thee, piercing thine heart,—and thine appearance uplifted in the air with arms outstretched after the manner of a Cross, while the holy Antony was preaching on the title of the Cross, as that angelic man, Monaldo, beheld;—these all are verily shewn and proven to have been seen, not in imaginations of the brain, but by revelation from heaven. Now, finally, that vision that was vouchsafed thee toward the end of thy life,—to wit, the exalted likeness of the Seraph, and the lowly Image of Christ

shewn in one,—kindling thee inwardly and marking thee outwardly as another Angel ascending from the sunrising, having the seal of the Living God in thee,—giveth a confirmation of faith unto those visions aforesaid, and likewise receiveth from them a witness unto its own truth. Lo, by these seven appearances of the Cross of Christ in thee and about thee, marvellously set forth and shewn in order of time, thou hast attained, as though by six steps, unto that seventh, where thou dost make an end, and rest. For the Cross of Christ was at the outset of thy conversion both set before thee, and taken up by thee, and thenceforward as thou madest progress in thy conversion, it was unceasingly sustained by thee throughout thy most holy life, and was shewn as an ensample unto others with such clearness and certainty that it demonstrateth that at the end thou didst arrive at the summit of Gospel perfection; thus none that is truly devout will reject this shewing-forth of Christ-like wisdom written in thy mortal dust, none that is a true believer will impeach it, none that is truly humble will lightly esteem it, seeing that it is verily set forth of God, and right worthy of all acceptation.

The Cross of Christ

CHAPTER XIV

OF HIS SUFFERINGS AND DEATH

He continueth to labour

1. Francis, now crucified with Christ alike in flesh and in spirit, while glowing with seraphic love toward God, did also thirst, even as did Christ Crucified, for the multitudes of them that should be saved. Wherefore, being unable to walk by reason of the nails protruding from his feet, he caused himself to be borne round cities and castled villages, emaciated as he was, that he might incite others to bear the Cross of Christ. And unto the Brethren also he would say: "Let us begin, Brethren, to serve our Lord God, for until now we have made but little progress." So mightily did he yearn to return unto the first beginnings of humility that he would serve the lepers as he had done at the outset, and would recall unto its early ministries his body that was now broken down by toils. Under Christ's leadership, he was minded to do mighty deeds, and, albeit his limbs were waxing feeble, yet, strong and glowing in spirit, he hoped in this new contest to vanquish the foe. For there is no room for languor or sloth where the spur of love ever urgeth on unto greater things. Yet in him the flesh was so much in agreement with the spirit, and so ready to obey, as that when the spirit strove to attain unto perfect holiness, the

flesh not only refrained from thwarting it, but did even hasten to forestall it.

albeit frail and suffering

2. Now in order that the merits of the man of God might be increased,—merits that of a truth do all find their consummation in endurance,—he began to suffer from divers ailments so grievously that scarce one of his limbs was free from pain and sore suffering. At length by divers sicknesses, prolonged and continuous, he was brought unto such a point that his flesh was wasted away, and only as it were the skin clave unto his bones. While he was afflicted by such grievous bodily suffering, he would call his pangs not punishments, but *sisters*. And when once he was harassed more sorely than usual by sharp pains, a certain simple Brother said unto him: "Brother, pray the Lord that He deal more gently with thee, for meseemeth that His hand is laid more heavily on thee than is right." Hearing this, the holy man groaned, and cried out, saying: "Did I not know the simple purity that is in thee, I would from henceforth have shunned thy company, for that thou hast dared to deem the divine counsels concerning me meet for blame." And albeit he was wholly worn out by the long continuance of his grievous sickness, he cast himself on the ground, jarring his frail bones in the hard fall. And, kissing the ground, he cried: "I give Thee thanks, O Lord God, for all these my pains, and I beseech Thee, my Lord, that, if it please Thee, Thou wilt add unto them an hundredfold; for this will be most acceptable unto me if laying sorrow upon me Thou dost not spare, since the fulfilling of Thy holy will is unto me

He prepareth for death

an overflowing solace." Thus he seemed unto the Brethren like another Job, whose powers of mind increased even as his bodily weakness increased. But he himself knew long before his death when it should be, and, when the day of his departure was at hand, said unto the Brethren that he was about to put off the tabernacle of his body, even as it had been revealed unto him of Christ.

3. When, therefore, during the two years after the impression of the sacred stigmata, to wit, in the twentieth year from his conversion, he had been shaped by many trial blows of painful sicknesses, like unto a stone meet to be set in the building of the heavenly Jerusalem, and as it were an hammered work that under the mallet of manifold trials is brought unto perfection,—he asked to be borne unto Saint Mary of the Little Portion, that he might yield up the breath of life there, where he had received the breath of grace. When he had been brought thither,—that he might give an ensample of the truth that he had naught in common with the world,—in that most severe weakness that followed after all his sickness, he prostrated himself in fervour of spirit all naked on the naked earth, that in that last hour, wherein the foe might still rise up against him, he might wrestle in his nakedness with that naked spirit. As he lay thus on the ground, his habit of haircloth laid aside, he lifted his face, as was his wont, toward heaven, and, wholly absorbed in that glory, covered with his left hand the wound in his right side, that it might not be seen, and said unto the Brethren: "I have done what was mine to do, may Christ teach you what is yours."

An habit lent him

4. While the companions of the Saint were weeping, stricken with keen pangs of pity, one of them, whom the man of God had said should be his Warden, knowing by divine inspiration his wish, rose in haste, and taking an habit, with the cord and breeches, brought it unto the little poor one of Christ, saying: "These I lend unto thee, as unto a beggar, and do thou receive them at the bidding of holy obedience." At this the holy man rejoiced, and exulted in gladness of heart, for that he saw that he had kept faith with the Lady Poverty even unto the end, and raising his hands unto heaven, he glorified his Christ for that, freed from all burdens, he was going unhindered unto Him. For all this he had done in his zeal for poverty, being minded to possess not even an habit, unless it were lent him by another. He was verily minded in all things to be made like unto Christ Crucified, Who had hung on the Cross in poverty, and grief, and nakedness. Wherefore, as at the outset of his conversion he had stood naked before the Bishop, so in the ending of his life he was minded to quit the world naked. He charged the Brethren that stood around him, on their loving obedience, that when they saw that he was dead, they should leave him lying naked on the ground for so long time as a man would take leisurely to compass the distance of a thousand paces. O truly Christ-like man, who strove alike in life to imitate the life of Christ; in dying, His dying; in death, His death, by a perfect likeness, and was found worthy to be adorned with an outward likeness unto Him!

He exhorteth and blesseth the Brethren

5. Then, as the hour of his departure was fast approaching, he made all the Brethren that were in the place be called unto him and, consoling them for his death with words of comfort, exhorted them with fatherly tenderness unto the love of God. He spake long of observing patience, and poverty, and fidelity unto the Holy Roman Church, placing the Holy Gospel before all other ordinances. Then as all the Brethren sat around him, he stretched his hands over them, crossing his arms in the likeness of the Cross, for that he did ever love that sign, and he blessed all the Brethren, present and absent alike, in the might and in the Name of the Crucified. He added moreover: "Be strong, all ye my sons, in the fear of the Lord, and abide therein for ever. And, since temptation will come, and trials draw nigh, blessed are they who shall continue in the works that they have begun. I for my part make haste to go unto God, unto Whose grace I commend you all." When he had made an end of gentle exhortations after this wise, this man most beloved of God asked them to bring him the book of the Gospels, and to read unto him from the Gospel according unto John, beginning at that place: "Before the feast of the Passover." Then he himself, as best he could, brake forth into the words of that Psalm: "I cried unto the Lord with my voice, with my voice unto the Lord did I make my supplication," and went through even unto the end, saying: "The righteous shall compass me about, for Thou shalt deal bountifully with me."

6. At length, when all the mysteries had been

fulfilled in him, and his most holy spirit was freed from the flesh, and absorbed into the boundless depths of the divine glory, the blessed man fell on sleep in the Lord. One of his Brethren and disciples saw that blessed soul, under the likeness of a star exceeding bright, borne on a dazzling cloudlet over many waters, mounting in a straight course unto heaven, as though it were radiant with the dazzling whiteness of his exalted sanctity, and filled with the riches of divine wisdom and grace alike, by the which the holy man was found worthy to enter the abode of light and peace, where with Christ he resteth for evermore. Moreover, a Brother named Augustine, who was then Minister of the Brethren in Terra di Lavoro, an holy and upright man, having come unto his last hour, and some time previously having lost the power of speech, in the hearing of them that stood by did on a sudden cry out and say: "Tarry for me, Father, tarry for me, lo, even now I am coming with thee!" When the Brethren asked and marvelled much unto whom he thus boldly spake, he made answer: "Did ye not see our Father, Francis, who goeth unto heaven"? And forthwith his holy soul, departing from the body, followed the most holy Father.

He falleth on sleep

The Bishop of Assisi at that time had gone on pilgrimage unto the Oratory of Saint Michael on Monte Gargano, and unto him the Blessed Francis, appearing on the night of his departure, said: "Behold, I leave the world and go unto heaven." The Bishop, then, rising at dawn, related unto his companions that which he had seen, and returned

Light at eventide

unto Assisi; there, when he had made diligent enquiry, he learnt of a certainty that in that hour whereof the vision had notified him, the blessed Father had departed from this world.

At the hour of the passing of the holy man, the larks—birds that love the light, and dread the shades of twilight—flocked in great numbers unto the roof of the house, albeit the shades of night were then falling, and, wheeling round it for a long while with songs even gladder than their wont, offered their witness, alike gracious and manifest, unto the glory of the Saint, who had been wont to call them unto the divine praises.

CHAPTER XV

OF HIS CANONISATION, AND THE TRANSLATION OF HIS BODY

His glorious life and death

1. Francis, then, the servant and friend of the Most High, the founder and leader of the Order of Brothers Minor, the professor of poverty, the pattern of penitence, the herald of truth, the mirror of holiness, and ensample of all Gospel perfection,—the heavenly grace preventing him,—did make progress in ordered course from the depths unto the heights. This wondrous man, in poverty exceeding rich, in humility exalted, in mortification full of life, in simplicity wise, and in every grace of character noteworthy, whom in life the Lord had marvellously made illustrious, was made of Him in death incomparably more illustrious. For as that blessed man departed from this world, his holy spirit entered the eternal mansions and was made glorious by a full draught of the fountain of life, while he left set forth in his body certain tokens that were to be his glory, so that his most undefiled flesh, that had been crucified with its lusts, and had become a new creature, did both set forth the image of Christ's Passion by its unexampled distinction, and prefigure the semblance of the Resurrection by the newness of the miracle.

2. For in those blessed limbs were seen the nails marvellously fashioned out of his flesh by

Marvellous appearance of the body

the divine might, and so implanted in that flesh that if they were pressed on one side they at once sprang back unto the other, like nerves that be joined together and taut. Moreover, there was manifestly seen in his body the scar of the wound in the side, nor inflicted nor wrought by man, but like unto the wounded side of the Saviour, the which, in Our Redeemer Himself, afforded us the holy mystery of man's redemption and regeneration. The appearance of the nails was black like iron, but the wound in the side was ruddy, and by a contraction of the flesh shaped as it were into a circle, in appearance like a rose most fair. The rest of his flesh,—which aforetime both from his infirmities and from natural complexion had tended toward swarthiness,—now shone with a dazzling whiteness, and was a type of the beauty of its second state and royal apparel.

3. His limbs were so soft and pliant when touched as that they seemed to have returned unto the softness of childhood, and were seen to be adorned by divers clear tokens of innocence. Since, then, the nails shewed forth black on this most dazzlingly white flesh, and the wound in the side shewed ruddy as a rosy flower in Spring, it is no wonder that so fair and marvellous a contrast filled the beholders with gladness and marvelling. His sons were weeping for the loss of so loveworthy a Father, and yet they were filled with no small joy as they kissed the seals of the Most High King in him. The newness of the miracle changed mourning into exultation, and turned the examination of the reason into dumb amazement.

Verily, this sight so unparalleled and so noteworthy was, unto all that beheld it, alike a confirmation of faith and an incitement unto love, while unto them that heard thereof it was a subject for marvelling, and the kindling of a yearning to behold it withal.

A doubter convinced

4. When the departure of the blessed Father became known, and the report of the miracle was spread abroad, the folk gathered in haste unto the spot, that with their bodily eyes they might behold that which should dispel all doubt from their reasons, and should add rejoicing unto their love. Accordingly, very many of the citizens of Assisi were admitted to behold and to kiss those sacred stigmata. Now one among them, a learned and wise knight, Jerome by name, a man illustrious and renowned, having had doubts concerning these sacred tokens, and having been an unbeliever like Thomas,—did very eagerly and boldly, in the presence of the Brethren and of the other citizens, move the nails, and touch with his own hands the hands, feet, and side of the Saint; and thus it befell that, while touching those authentic marks of the wounds of Christ, he cut away every wound of unbelief from his own heart and the hearts of all. Wherefore he became thereafter a constant witness, among others, unto this truth that he had learnt with such certainty, and confirmed it by an oath, laying his hands on thrice-holy things.

5. Now his Brethren and sons, that had been summoned for the passing of their Father, together with the entire assembly of the folk, devoted that night wherein Christ's dear Confessor had de-

The body borne to Assisi

parted, unto divine praises, in such wise that they seemed no mourners for the dead, but a watch of Angels. When morning came, the crowds that had come together, carrying branches of trees and many wax lights, brought the holy body unto the city of Assisi, with hymns and chants. Moreover, they passed by the church of Saint Damian, where at that time that noble virgin Clare, now glorified in heaven, abode cloistered with her Sisters; and there for a space they stayed, and set down the holy body, adorned with those heavenly pearls, that it might be seen and embraced by those holy virgins. Coming at length with rejoicing unto the city, they laid the precious treasure that they were bearing in the church of Saint George, with all reverence. In that very place, Francis as a little boy had learned his letters, and there it was that he first preached in after days, and there, finally, he found his first resting-place.

6. Now the holy Father departed from the shipwreck of this world in the year 1226 of the Lord's Incarnation, on the fourth day of October, at late even of a Saturday, and on the Sunday he was buried.

At once the holy man began to shine in the glory of many and great miracles, the light of the divine countenance being uplifted upon him, so that the loftiness of his holiness that, during his life, had been conspicuous in the world for the ruling of men's lives through its ensample of perfect uprightness, was, now that he himself was reigning with Christ, approved from heaven by miracles of divine power, so that belief might be

thoroughly confirmed. And since in divers parts of the world the glorious marvels wrought by him, and the great blessings won through him, were kindling many unto devotion unto Christ, and inciting them unto veneration for the Saint himself,—so that men's tongues, as well as these deeds, were loud in his praise,—it came unto the ears of the Supreme Pontiff, the lord Gregory the Ninth, what great things God was working through His servant Francis.

Veneration for the Saint

7. Of a truth, that Shepherd of the Church had been fully assured of his marvellous holiness, not alone by hearing of the miracles wrought after his death, but also by proofs during his life of what he had seen with his own eyes, and handled with his own hands, and he had put perfect faith therein; so that, by reason of this, he now in no wise doubted but that Francis was glorified of the Lord in heaven. Wherefore, that he might act in accord with Christ, Whose Vicar he was, he was minded, with devout consideration, to make the Saint famous on earth, as one most worthy of all reverence. Moreover, to gain the fullest assurance throughout the whole world for the glorification of that most holy man, he caused the miracles that were known of him to be written and approved by trusty witnesses, and then examined by those of the Cardinals that seemed least favourable unto the business. When they had been diligently discussed and approved of all, with the unanimous counsel and consent of his Brethren, and of all the Prelates that were then in the Curia, he decreed that he should be canonised. Accordingly, he came in person unto

Canonisation and Translation

the city of Assisi in the year of the Lord's Incarnation 1228, on the sixteenth day of July, a Sunday, and with rites exceeding solemn, that it would take long to narrate, he enrolled the blessed Father in the list of the Saints.

8. Now in the year of the Lord 1230, the Brethren assembled for a Chapter-General that was held at Assisi, and his body consecrated unto the Lord was translated unto the Church built in his honour on the twenty-fifth day of May. While that holy treasure, signed with the seal of the Most High King, was being removed, He Whose image it set forth deigned to work many miracles, that by the fragrance of its healing power the hearts of the faithful might be drawn to follow after Christ. Verily, it was right fitting that the blessed bones of him, whom God had made well-pleasing unto Him and beloved of Him in life, and whom He had carried unto heaven by the grace of contemplation, like Enoch, and had borne aloft into the sky in a fiery chariot, by his fervour of love, like Elias,—being now among the heavenly Spring flowers of the everlasting planting, should flourish out of their place with a marvellous fragrance.

9. Furthermore, even as that blessed man in life had been distinguished by marvellous tokens of virtue, so too from the day of his departure unto this present time, he doth shine throughout the divers parts of the world in the light of famed marvels and miracles, the divine power glorifying him. For the blind and the deaf, the dumb and the lame, the dropsical and the paralysed, the possessed and the leper, the shipwrecked

and the captive, have found succour by his merits, and in all diseases, needs, and perils he hath been an aid. But in that many dead have been miraculously raised through him, there is made manifest unto the faithful the glorious working of the power of the Most High, exalting His Saint, and His is the honour and glory throughout the endless ages of eternity. Amen.

His aid in troubles

HERE ENDETH THE LIFE OF THE BLESSED FRANCIS

HERE BEGINNETH THE NARRATION OF CERTAIN MIRACLES WROUGHT AFTER HIS DEATH

I. *First, concerning the powers of the sacred Stigmata.*

1 To the honour and glory of Almighty God. **The chief miracle**

Forasmuch as I am about to narrate certain well-proven miracles wrought by the Blessed Francis after that he had been glorified in heaven, I deemed that it behoved me to make a beginning from that chief miracle wherein the might of the Cross of Jesus is set forth and its glory renewed. Francis, then, being made a new man, was distinguished by a new and astounding miracle, and was seen to be marked out by an unparalleled honour that had been granted unto no past age; to wit, he was adorned with the sacred stigmata, and conformed, in the body of this death, unto the Body of the Crucified. Whatsoever a mortal tongue might say concerning this, would fall short of its due praise. Of a truth, all the thoughts of the man of God, his public efforts and private meditations, were concerned with the Cross of the Lord; wherefore, that the sign of the Cross, the which from the beginning of his conversion had been imprinted on his heart, might outwardly be seen on his body, he sheltered himself within that Cross, taking unto him a penitent's habit made in

Vision of the Pope

fashion like a Cross. Thus, even as his mind within had put on the Crucified Lord, so his body too put on the armour of the Cross, that in that same sign whereby God had routed the powers of the air, the Lord's own army might wage His warfare. But from the very beginning of the time wherein he entered upon the warfare for the Crucified, divers mystic tokens of the Cross shone round about him, as becometh clearly evident unto one considering the story of his life, and how, by the sevenfold appearing of the Lord's Cross, he was wholly transformed into the likeness of the Crucified, in thoughts, emotions, and deeds alike, by his rapturous love of Him. Wherefore the mercy of the Most High King, that doth stoop, beyond all mortal conception, unto such as love Him, meetly imprinted upon him the banner of His Cross, to bear in his body withal, so that he who had been endowed with such wondrous love of the Cross should be made a marvel by a wondrous token of honour of that Cross.

2. To confirm the unanswerable truth of this astounding miracle, there are enlisted not only the evidence of them that beheld and touched them—evidence in all ways worthy of belief—but also sundry marvellous visions and powers that after his death shone brightly forth to dispel all clouds from men's minds. For ensample, the lord Pope Gregory the Ninth, of blessed memory—of whom the holy man had foretold in prophecy that he should be exalted unto the Apostolic See—before that he enrolled in the catalogue of Saints this standard-bearer of the Cross, felt some particles of doubt in his mind concerning the wound in the

side. Then one night,—as that holy Bishop would relate with tears,—the Blessed Francis appeared unto him in a dream, shewing a stern countenance, and, blaming him for the doubts of his heart, raised his right arm, revealed the wound, and demanded of him a phial to receive the blood that welled up and flowed from his side. In his dream, the Supreme Pontiff proffered him the phial that he sought, and it appeared to be filled, even unto the brim, with the blood from his side. Thenceforward he began to be such a devout adherent of that holy miracle, and such a jealous and ardent champion thereof, as that he might in no wise brook that any man should dare, with arrogant attacks, to dim the glory of those radiant tokens, but would chastise such an one with stern reproofs.

and of a Brother

3. A certain Brother Minor of the Order, whose ministry was preaching, and who had much influence by reason of his especial uprightness and good repute, had been fully convinced of the truth of the sacred stigmata. Howbeit, when with his finite judgement he sought within him a reason for this miracle, he began to be harassed by some scruples and doubts. When therefore for several days he had endured this conflict, his carnal nature gaining power, as he slept one night Saint Francis appeared unto him, his feet stained with mire, his mien humbly severe and patiently angered. "Now what," saith he, "be these struggles and wavering opinions in thee? What be these base doubts? Behold my hands and my feet." Then he beheld the pierced hands, but saw not the stigmata on the feet that were covered with mire. "Wipe off," saith he, "the mire from my feet, and recog-

Miracle of the picture

nise the place of the nails." Then that other devoutly took hold on them, and seemed unto himself to wipe off the mire and to touch with his hands the places where the nails were. Forthwith, on waking up, he shed abundant tears, and washed away, by his floods of tears and by a public confession withal, those his former feelings that had been, as it were, all stained with mire.

4. There was in the city of Rome a certain matron, noble alike for the excellence of her life and the distinction of her family, who had chosen Saint Francis for her patron, and had a picture of him painted in her secret chamber, wherein she was wont to pray unto the Father Which is in secret. Now on a certain day when she had devoted herself unto prayer, she was meditating upon the picture of the Saint and saw that it had not those sacred marks of the stigmata, whereupon she began to grieve and to wonder much. But it was no wonder that what the painter had left out should not be in the picture. Yet for many days she sought anxiously in her mind what might be the cause of this omission; when, lo, one day, on a sudden, there appeared in the picture those marvellous tokens, in fashion as they are wont to be painted in other pictures of the Saint. Trembling, she forthwith summoned her daughter, that was devoted unto God, asking her whether that picture had not hitherto been without the stigmata. She declared it was so, and affirmed on oath that aforetime it had shewn no stigmata, whereas now the stigmata might be seen upon it. Yet, forasmuch as men's minds do ofttimes induce them to fall, and turn the truth into a matter for

doubting, some evil hesitation entered once again the heart of the lady, whether perchance that picture had not been marked with those tokens from the first. But the power of God added yet a second miracle that the first might not be despised. For those marks did at once vanish, and the picture remained despoiled of the special honours, so that the earlier miracle was proven by that which followed it.

A wounded man

5. Moreover at Lerida, in Catalonia, it befell that a certain man, named John, who was devoted unto the Blessed Francis, was one evening passing along a certain street, wherein men were lying in ambush to slay, not him indeed, for they bore him no enmity,—but a certain other who was like him to look upon, and who was at the time in his company. One of them rushed out from the ambush, and, thinking him to be his foe, struck at him again and again, with such deadly blows as that there was no hope left for his recovery. For the first stroke inflicted upon him was within a little of cutting one shoulder clean off and the arm therewith, while another blow made such a gash under the breast as that the rush of air therefrom put out about six candles that were joined together. Accordingly, in the judgement of the physicians his cure was hopeless, all the more so as the wounds began to putrify, and gave forth such an intolerable odour as that even his wife was stricken with loathing, and he now seemed beyond the aid of any mortal remedies. Then he turned him to implore the succour of the Blessed Father Francis with utmost devoutness, yea, he had called upon him with all faith, and on the Blessed

is healed by the touch

Virgin likewise, even while the wounds were being dealt. And lo! as the ill-fated man lay abandoned on his couch of affliction, and, sleepless, oft called upon the name of Francis, and cried it aloud repeatedly, one stood by him in the habit of a Brother Minor, having entered,—so it seemed unto him,—by the window. And he, calling him by name, said: "Because thou hast had faith in me, lo! the Lord will deliver thee." When the sick man asked of him who he was, he made answer that he was Francis, and, forthwith, approaching him, undid the bandages of his wounds, and, as it seemed, anointed them all with ointment. Then forthwith, as the sick man felt the gentle touch of those holy hands, mighty to heal by the power of the stigmata of the Saviour, the corruption was driven out, the flesh was restored, and the wounds closed, and he himself was restored unto his former perfect soundness. This done, the Blessed Father departed. Then the wounded man, feeling himself healed, and gladly bursting forth into utterance of God's praises and the praises of the Blessed Francis, called his wife. She ran thither with all speed, and, seeing him stand upright whom she had thought to have buried on the next day, was mightily astonied and adread, and made the whole place echo with her cries. Her household and friends gathered round in haste, and strove to lay her husband back on the bed, deeming him distraught, but he for his part strove with them, and declared and shewed that he was healed; whereupon they were dumb with astonishment, and were all as it were carried out of their wits,

thinking that what they beheld was a phantom of the imagination. For he whom but a little before they had beheld mangled with the cruellest wounds, and already all wasted away, they now saw in full health, and jubilant. And he who had been made whole said unto them: "Be not afeared, nor deem that which ye see to be an empty phantom, for Saint Francis hath but even now departed from this place, and by the touch of his holy hands he made me perfectly sound from all my wounds." As the fame of this miracle increased, the whole folk hastened unto the place, and beholding in such an evident portent the power of the stigmata of the Blessed Francis, were filled alike with amazement and with rejoicing, and exalted the standard-bearer of Christ with great proclamations of his praises. In sooth, it was meet that the Blessed Father, then dead in the flesh but living with Christ, should by the wondrous apparition of his bodily form and by the gentle touch of his holy hands grant health unto a man mortally wounded, seeing that he had borne in his flesh the stigmata of Him Who in His mercy died, and miraculously rose again, that He might heal by the power of His stripes the human race that had been wounded and left half dead.

of the Saint's hands

6. In Potenza, a city of Apulia, there was a certain cleric, Roger by name, an honour-worthy man, and a Canon of the Cathedral Church. He had been sore troubled by an infirmity, and on a day went into a church to pray; now there was therein a picture of the Blessed Francis, shewing the glorious stigmata, and he began to doubt concerning that exalted miracle, deeming it a thing

Unbelief chastised

unheard-of and impossible. Now on a sudden, as with impaired judgement he was inwardly revolving these idle thoughts, he felt himself forcibly stricken in the palm of his left hand under his glove, and heard a whizzing sound, as when a dart is hurled from a mangonel, and at once, alike wounded by the blow and astonied at the sound, he drew his glove from off his hand, that he might see with his eyes that which he had already perceived by touch and sound. And, albeit there had been afore no wound in his palm, he beheld in the middle of the palm a wound like unto that inflicted by the stroke of an arrow, wherefrom there proceeded such burning heat as that he seemed like to faint by reason thereof. Wondrous to relate, there was no trace of injury to be seen on his glove, so that the penalty of the hidden wound inflicted upon him corresponded unto the hidden wound in his heart. Then for the space of two days he cried aloud and groaned, pricked by intensest pain, and drew off the veil from his heart's doubts, for all to see. And he declared and solemnly sware that he truly believed that Saint Francis had received the sacred stigmata, asserting that all the vain imaginings of doubt had left him. And, as a suppliant, he prayed the Saint of God by the sacred stigmata to succour him, and enriched his abundant heartfelt prayers with abundant floods of tears. Then befell a sure miracle. As he laid aside his unbelief, the healing of his mind was followed by the healing of his body. All his pain was soothed, the burning was cooled, and no trace of the wound remained, and thus it befell that the

hidden sickness of the mind was, by the providence of the divine mercy, healed through the evident burning of the flesh, and, as the mind was healed, the flesh itself was healed together with it. The man became humble, devoted unto God, and bound by ties of constant intimacy unto the Saint and the Order of the Brethren. The solemn miracle of this affair was attested on oath, and the knowledge thereof was handed down unto us in letters confirmed by the authority of the Bishop's seal.

Mercy for the penitent

Accordingly, there is no room for doubt concerning the sacred stigmata, nor in this matter let any man's eye be evil because God is good, as though the bestowal of such a gift were not in accord with His everlasting goodness. For if, by that seraphic love, many members clave unto the Head, that is, Christ,—so that in the warfare, clad in like armour, they were found worthy, and in the kingdom were exalted unto a like glory,—none that is of sound mind will deny that this pertaineth unto the glory of Christ, and unto that alone.

II. *Of the dead that were raised*

1. In the town of Monte Marano, near Benevento, a certain woman that had an especial devotion unto Saint Francis went the way of all flesh. Now, when the clergy had come together at night to perform the funeral rites and vigils, and to chant the Psalms, on a sudden, in the sight of all, that woman rose up upon the bier, and called one of the priests that stood by, who was her confessor, saying : "I am fain to confess,

Confession after death

Father; hear my sin. I, when dead, was delivered over to be straitly imprisoned, for that I had never made confession of the sin that I will now disclose unto thee. But, (saith she), by the prayers offered for me by Saint Francis, whom, while I lived, I served with a devout mind, it hath now been vouchsafed me to return unto the body, to the end that, having revealed that sin, I may merit everlasting life. And lo! yourselves shall see how that, after I have disclosed the same, I shall hasten unto the promised rest." Trembling, then, she confessed unto the trembling priest, and, after receiving absolution, laid herself quietly down on the bier, and in blessed wise fell on sleep in the Lord.

2. In the town of Pamarco, that is set among the mountains of Apulia, a father and mother had one only daughter, of tender age, and tenderly beloved beyond all else. And she was brought unto death by a grievous sickness, and her parents, having no hope of another child to take her place, deemed themselves as dead when she died. Their kinsfolk and friends gathered together for this right piteous burial, but the ill-fated mother lay filled with woe unspeakable, and wrapt in her supreme sorrow, so that she perceived no whit of aught that befell. Meanwhile Saint Francis, accompanied by but one other, appeared, and deigned to visit the desolate woman, whom he knew had been devoted unto him, and addressed her with kindly words: "Weep not;" saith he, "for the light of thy lamp, whose quenching thou bewailest, shall be restored unto thee by my prayers." Forthwith the woman arose, and,

An only daughter raised

revealing unto all that which the Saint had said unto her, would not suffer the dead body to be borne forth; but, calling on the name of Saint Francis with great faith, and laying hold on her dead daughter, she raised her up, alive and sound, while all looked on and marvelled.

3. The Brethren at Nocera once begged the loan of a certain cart, whereof they stood somewhat in need, from a man named Peter, but he, after the manner of a fool, answered them with abuse instead of with the help they sought, and in place of the alms craved in honour of Saint Francis, blasphemed his name. At once, the man repented him of his foolishness, for the fear of God came upon him, lest perchance the vengeance of the Lord might follow, even as it did speedily follow. For forthwith his firstborn son fell sick, and, after a short space, gave up the ghost. The unhappy father rolled on the ground, and called without ceasing on Francis, the Saint of God, crying with tears: "It is I who sinned, it is I who spake in evil wise, thou oughtest to scourge me in mine own person. O Saint, restore unto me, that am now penitent, that which thou didst take from me when I wickedly blasphemed. I give myself unto thee, I offer myself for ever unto thy service, for I will ever offer unto Christ a devout sacrifice of praise for the honour of thy name." O marvel! At these words, the boy arose, and, forbidding his mourning, declared that as he died, and had left the body, by the Blessed Francis he had been brought back and restored.

4. A certain notary in the city of Rome had a little son scarce seven years old, who once, when

Raising of a child

his mother was going unto the church of Saint Mark, was fain, as children be, to go with her; when he was bidden by his mother to tarry at home, he threw himself from a window of the palace, and, his bones broken by the final concussion, breathed his last on the spot. His mother, who had not yet gone far, at the sound of a fall feared it might be that of her child, and returned with all speed; then, when she found her son thus suddenly taken from her by this pitiable accident, she forthwith began to lay vengeful hands upon herself, and with woeful cries roused the whole neighbourhood to mourn with her. Then a certain Brother, named Ralph, of the Order of Minors, who had come thither to preach, drew nigh the child and, full of faith, said unto the father: "Dost thou believe that Francis, the Saint of God, can avail to raise up thy son from the dead, by the love that he ever had for Christ Who was crucified to restore life unto men?" When he made answer that he firmly believed and faithfully confessed it, and would be for evermore a servant of the Saint if by his merits he might be found meet to receive from God so great a benefit,—that Brother prostrated himself in prayer, together with the Brother that was his companion, stirring up the rest that were present unto prayer. This done, the boy began to gape a little and, opening his eyes and stretching his arms, raised himself, and at once, in the presence of all, walked, whole and sound, restored by the wondrous might of the Saint unto life and health at the same time.

5. In the city of Capua, while a boy was playing

with many others on the bank of the river Voltorno, he heedlessly fell into deep water, and the rushing river swiftly engulfed him, and buried him, dead, beneath its sand. At the shouts of the other boys, who had been playing with him nigh the river, a great crowd of people gathered together there. The whole multitude invoked, with devout supplication, the merits of the Blessed Francis, that he would behold the faith of his parents that had a devotion for him, and would deign to snatch their offspring from the peril of death; then lo! a certain man that had been standing afar off, hearing their shouts, came up, and he was a swimmer. After a long search, at length, calling upon the help of the Blessed Francis, he found the place wherein the river slime had formed as it were a tomb for the child's body, the which he dug out and drew therefrom, and, to his sorrow, saw that he was dead. But the folk that stood round, albeit they saw the child was dead, did nevertheless, weeping and crying aloud, exclaim: "O Saint Francis, restore the boy unto his father!" Yea, even some Jews that had come up, moved by natural compassion, cried: "O Saint Francis, restore the boy unto his father!" On a sudden, the boy, to the wonder and delight of all, rose up unscathed, and begged and implored that he might be taken unto the Church of the Blessed Francis, that he might devoutly pay his thanks unto him by whose might he knew that he had been miraculously raised up.

Of a drowned boy

6. In the city of Sessa, in the district that is called "At the Columns," a house suddenly fell, and buried a youth, killing him on the spot.

Of a youth that was crushed

Men and women ran together from all sides, agitated by the sound of the fall; they cleared away from one place and another the beams and stones, and brought unto his ill-fated mother her dead son. Then she, choked with bitterest sobs, cried, as best she might, in piteous tones: "O Saint Francis, Saint Francis, restore unto me my son!" And not she only, but all that were present, besought the protection of the blessed Father. Yet, as there was neither voice nor sense in the body, they laid it upon a bier, intending to bury it on the morrow. Howbeit, the mother had confidence in the Lord by the merits of His Saint, and made a vow that she would cover the altar of the Blessed Francis with a new linen cloth, if he would recall her son to life for her. And lo! about midnight the youth began to gape, his members waxed warm, and he rose up alive and well, and brake forth into praises. Yea more, he incited the clergy who had assembled together, and the whole folk, to pay lauds and thanks unto God and unto the Blessed Francis, with glad minds.

7. A certain youth, named Gerlandino, a native of Ragusa, went forth in the vintage season unto the vineyards, and placed himself in the wine vat under the wine-press, to fill his skin bottles. On a sudden, some immense stones,—the wooden supports collapsing,—crashed upon his head with a deadly blow. At once his father hastened unto his son, and, in his despair, succoured him not as he lay encumbered, but left him under the load even as it had fallen upon him. The vine-dressers ran together right speedily as they heard

the woeful utterance of his loud cries, and, like the father of the boy, were filled with great sorrow, and drew forth the youth, already dead, from the ruin. But his father, falling at the feet of Jesus, humbly prayed that, by the merits of Saint Francis, whose feast-day was then at hand, He would deign to restore unto him his only son. He continued to sigh forth prayers, and to vow to perform many pious ministries, and promised to visit the tomb of the holy man, together with his son, if he were raised from the dead. Then a sure miracle befell. For forthwith the boy, whose whole body had been crushed, was restored unto life and sound health, and stood up rejoicing before them all, reproving them that mourned, and declaring that by the intercession of Saint Francis he had been restored unto life.

The young vine-dresser

8. In Germany, he raised up another dead man, concerning whom the lord Pope Gregory,—at the time of the translation of the Saint's body,—by Apostolic letters assured and gladdened all the Brethren, that had gathered together for the translation and the Chapter. The manner of that miracle I have not related, being ignorant thereof, and deeming the Papal attestation to be better than the record of all other assertions.

III. *Of them that he delivered from the peril of death*

1. In the outskirts of Rome, there was a nobleman named Rudolph, whose wife was devoted unto God and oft received as her guests the Brothers Minor, alike from the virtue of hospi-

The castle warder

tality, and from her veneration and love for the Blessed Francis. One night, the warder of the castle, who slept on the topmost tower, was lying upon an heap of wood that had been placed on the very edge of the wall, and, their fastenings becoming undone, fell on to the palace roof, and thence on to the ground. At the sound of the fall, the whole household was aroused, and, when they heard of the warder's fall, the lord and lady of the castle hastened unto the spot, with the Brethren. He, indeed, who had fallen from the height, was wrapt in so deep a sleep as that he was awakened neither by the continued falling of the beams, nor by the tumult of the household that ran together with shouts. At last he was roused by their hands dragging and pushing him, whereupon he began to complain that they had cut him off from a sweet repose, declaring that he had been sleeping sweetly in the arms of the Blessed Francis. When he had been instructed of others concerning his own fall, and saw himself on the ground, whereas he had lain on the topmost tower, he was astounded that that had befallen him which he had no whit perceived, and promised, in the presence of all, that he would become a penitent by reason of his reverence for God and for the Blessed Francis.

2. In the town of Pofi, that is situated in Campania, a certain priest named Thomas approached the mill of the church that he might repair it. But as he walked heedlessly along the bank of the canal, where a deep whirlpool was flowing with a great inrush of water, he fell suddenly, and was entangled in the nail-studded

wheel, whose motion turned the mill. He lay thus encumbered with the wood, and the rush of the waters fell on his face, as he was prostrate, so that he could not cry aloud, howbeit, in his heart, he piteously called upon Saint Francis. Thus for a long space he lay there, and his companions, having now utterly despaired of his life, turned the mill forcibly in the opposite direction, and the priest, thus cast forth, was hurled about, gasping, in the flood of water. And lo! a certain Brother Minor, clad in a white tunic and girt with a rope, with great gentleness took him by the arm, and drew him forth from the river, saying: "I am Francis, upon whom thou hast called." Then he, thus delivered, was greatly astonied, and would fain have kissed his footprints, and ran hither and thither in his anxiety, enquiring of his companions: "Where is he? Whither hath the Saint departed? Which way took he?" But they, trembling, fell prostrate on the ground, exalting the glorious marvels of the great God, and the virtues and merits of His humble servant.

The drowning priest

3. Certain youths of Borgo di Celano went forth into some fields to cut hay; now in these fields there was hidden an ancient well, whose mouth was overshadowed by green grasses, and it held water to a depth of about four paces. As the youths separated, and went singly about the meadow, one of them fell by accident into the well. The deep pit swallowed his body, but his spirit and mind rose on high to seek the intercession of the Blessed Francis, and, even as he fell, he cried with faith and trust: "Saint Francis, aid

Divers deliverances from perils,

me!" The others went hither and thither, as the lad was not to be found, seeking him with shouts, and tears, and searching all round. Discovering at length that he had fallen into the well, they returned in haste unto Borgo, with lamentations, to tell what had befallen and to seek for help. But as they returned, bringing with them a great crowd of men, one of whom they let down by a rope into the well, they beheld the lad sitting on the surface of the water, having suffered no injury whatsoever. When he had been drawn forth from the well, the youth said unto all that stood by: "As I fell of a sudden, I invoked the protection of the Blessed Francis, and he at once, even as I fell, stood by me in bodily presence, and, stretching out his hand, gently laid hold on me, nor ever left me until, you also aiding, he drew me forth from the well."

4. In the church of the Blessed Francis, at Assisi, the lord Bishop of Ostia,—he that was afterward the Chief Pontiff, Alexander,—was preaching in the presence of the Roman Curia, when an heavy and great stone, that had been left through negligence over the lofty stone pulpit, was pushed out of place by excessive pressure, and fell on the head of a certain woman. As all the bystanders deemed her already quite dead, and that her head had been quite shattered, they covered her with the cloak that she was wearing, so that, the sermon ended, her pitiable body might be borne forth from the church. Howbeit, the woman had committed herself in faith unto the Blessed Francis, before whose altar she lay. And lo! the preaching ended, she rose up in the

presence of all so sound as that no trace of injury might be seen upon her. Yea, what is more marvellous, she having for a long time past until that very hour suffered from an almost incessant headache, was from thence utterly freed from trouble of any disease, as she herself afterward bare witness.

from accidents, and death

5. At Corneto, at the founding of a bell in the place of the Brethren, certain devout men had come together, and a boy of eight years, named Bartholomew, was bringing a gift for the Brethren that were at work. Lo! on a sudden a strong wind arose, and shook the house, so that the great, heavy door in the gateway fell upon the little boy with such a mighty crash as that all believed one on whom such an immense weight had fallen must needs be crushed by the deadly concussion. For he lay so completely buried beneath the fallen weight as that nothing of him could be seen from without. All the bystanders ran unto the spot, invoking the powerful right hand of the Blessed Francis. Yea, his father too, whose limbs had become stiff so that he was unable to stir for grief, committed his son with prayers and cries unto Saint Francis. At length the deadly weight was raised from above the boy, and behold, he whom they had believed to be dead, was seen rejoicing, as though roused from sleep, and with no trace of any injury upon him. Accordingly, when he was fourteen years of age, he became a Brother Minor, and was afterward a learned and renowned preacher in the Order.

6. The men of Lentino had quarried from the mountain an immense stone, that was to be laid

Deliverances from accidents

upon the altar in a church of the Blessed Francis that was then about to be consecrated. Now about forty men were striving to place the stone on a cart, and, while they were putting forth their strength again and again, the stone fell upon one man, and buried him as in a tomb. Perturbed in mind, and knowing not what to do, the greater part of the men departed in despair. Howbeit, ten remained, and they with lamentable cries called upon Saint Francis, imploring him not to suffer a man to meet with such an horrible death while in his service; and at last, regaining courage, they removed the stone with such ease as that none could doubt the power of Francis had come unto their aid. The man rose up sound in all his limbs, and had, moreover, recovered the clear sight of his eyes, that had been dim afore, so that thus it might be given unto all to know of what mighty efficacy are the merits of the Blessed Francis in cases beyond hope.

7. A like thing befell at San Severino in the March of Ancona. Whileas an immense stone, that had been brought from Constantinople for the church of the Blessed Francis, was being dragged along by the strength of many, it slipped on a sudden, and fell upon one of them that were dragging it. Albeit he was believed to be not only dead, but also utterly ground to pieces, nevertheless, the Blessed Francis coming unto his aid and raising the stone, he leapt forth from the weight of the stone that had lain upon him well and sound, free from all injury.

8. A citizen of Gaëta, named Bartholomew, had toiled much in the building of a certain church of

the Blessed Francis, when a beam, that had not been firmly fixed, fell crashing on his head, and sorely injuring him. Feeling that death was coming upon him, and being a man faithful and religious, he besought the Last Sacrament from a Brother. The Brother, deeming him about to die, lest he might not be able to bring It in time, set before him the words of the Blessed Augustine, saying unto Him : "Believe, and thou hast eaten." On the following night, the Blessed Francis appeared unto him with eleven Brethren, carrying a lamb in his bosom, and approached his couch, and called him by name, saying : "Bartholomew, fear not, for the enemy shall not prevail against thee, who was minded to hinder thee in my service. This is the Lamb, Whom thou didst ask to be given unto thee, and Whom by reason of thy good desire thou hast received, by Whose might moreover thou shalt gain health of both the inner and the outer man." With these words, he laid his hands upon the wounds, and bade him return unto the work that he had begun. The man, rising very early in the morning, appeared unscathed and rejoicing unto those who had left him half dead, filling them with marvel and amaze, and thus he stirred up their minds, alike by his own ensample, and the miracle wrote by the Saint, unto veneration and love for the blessed Father.

The devout builder

9. A man named Nicholas, of the town of Ceperano, fell on a day into the hands of his cruel enemies. They, with brutal ferocity, inflicted wound upon wound upon him, not ceasing to rage against the ill-fated man until they deemed him either dead, or on the point of death. Howbeit,

Deliverance of a man wounded

this Nicholas had cried with a loud voice, so soon as the first wounds were dealt him, "Saint Francis, succour me! Saint Francis, aid me!" Many folk at a distance heard these cries, albeit they were not able to bring him succour. At length he was carried home, all covered with his own blood, howbeit, he confidently maintained that he should not see death by reason of those wounds, and that he even felt no pain therefrom, forasmuch as that Saint Francis had succoured him, and had obtained from the Lord that he might show his repentance. That which ensued confirmed his words, for, when the blood was washed off, he stood up forthwith unscathed, contrary unto all men's expectation.

10. The son of a nobleman in the town of San Gimignano was labouring under a sore sickness, and, despairing of ever regaining his health, was brought down unto extremities. For there flowed from his eyes a stream of blood, such as is wont to gush forth when a vein in the arm is cut, and, as other sure signs of approaching death were seen in the rest of his body, he was given up for dead, nay more, as through weakness of spirit and of vital force he had lost the power of feeling and of movement, he seemed to have already quitted the body. Yet, while his kinsfolk and friends were assembling together to bewail him, as is the custom, and were treating only of his burial, his father, who trusted in the Lord, ran with hurried steps unto the church of the Blessed Francis in that town, put a rope round his neck, and threw himself on the ground in the deepest humility; lying thus, he vowed vows and offered up many

prayers, and merited by his sighs and groanings to have Saint Francis as his advocate with Christ. Then the father returned at once unto his son, and, finding him restored unto health, changed his mourning into rejoicing.

and of others at the point of death

11. A like miracle was wrought of the Lord, by the merits of His Saint, on a damsel in a town of Catalonia, called Tamarid, and on another in Ancona; these twain were through exceeding sore sickness nigh their last breath, when the Blessed Francis, who had been invoked with faith by their parents, restored them forthwith unto entire health.

12. A clerk at Vico Bianco, Matthew by name, having drunk of a deadly poison, was so weighed down thereby as that he lost all power of speech, and could but await his last end. A priest exhorted him to confess unto him, but could not avail to wring one word from him. Nevertheless, in his heart he was humbly beseeching Christ that, through the merits of the Blessed Francis, He would deign to snatch him from the jaws of death, and speedily, as,—strengthened by the Lord,—he uttered the name of the Blessed Francis with faith and devotion, he vomited forth the poison, as they who were present bear witness, and returned thanks unto his deliverer.

IV. *Of them that were saved from shipwreck*

1. Some sailors were exposed unto great peril of the sea, when,—they being about ten miles distant from the port of Barletta,—an exceeding great storm arose, and they, already doubting of

Succour of mariners

their lives, let down the anchors. But as the swelled ever more fiercely under the blasts of storm, the ropes were broken and the anchors behind, and they themselves were driven hit and thither over the waters in a doubtful wavering course. At length, by the divine the sea was calmed, and they made ready to all efforts to regain the anchors, the ropes wher were floating on the top of the water. And si they could not compass it in their own streng they invoked the aid of many Saints, and w worn out with toil and sweat, howbeit, at the of a whole day they had not regained a sin one. Now there was a certain sailor, whose na was Perfetto, but whose way of life was far fr perfect, and he, in mocking fashion, said unto companions: "Look now, ye have invoked aid of all the Saints, and as ye see, there is one that will succour ye. Let us invoke Francis, who is a new Saint, perchance he will d into the sea in some wise, and restore us our anchors!" The rest agreed unto the advice Perfetto, not in mockery, but in earnest, and, proving him for his derisive words, made a fr will vow unto the Saint, and confirmed the san at once, in a moment, without any implement, anchors floated on the top of the water, as thou the properties of the iron had been turned into buoyancy of wood.

2. A pilgrim, weak in body by reason o very sharp attack of fever, wherefrom he lately suffered, was carried on board a ship, voyaged from the parts beyond the sea. He cherished an especial feeling of devotion for

Blessed Francis, and had chosen him as his advocate with the Heavenly King. Now he, being not yet entirely recovered of his sickness, was tormented by a burning thirst, and, as water was then failing them, he began to cry with a loud voice: "Go with faith, pour out a cup for me, for that the Blessed Francis hath filled my little vessel with water!" O wonder! They found the vessel full of water, though it had been afore left empty. On another day, a storm arose, and the ship was covered with the waves, and shaken by the violence of the hurricanes, so that all now feared shipwreck; then this same feeble man began, with sudden cries, to make his voice echo throughout the ship: "Arise, all of ye," saith he, "and meet the Blessed Francis, who is coming hither. Lo, he is at hand to save us!" Thus with loud cries and many tears, he fell on his face, and adored him. At once, at the appearance of the Saint, the sick man regained his entire health, and there followed a great calm of the sea.

and of a pilgrim

3. Brother James of Rieti, when with some other Brethren he was crossing a river in a small boat, and had first landed his companions on the bank, was making ready to disembark after them. But by a mischance that little boat upset, and, while the steersman swam, the Brother was plunged into the deep water. The Brethren that were set ashore invoked the Blessed Francis with loving entreaty, and with tears and sighs implored him to succour his son. The Brother too, that was plunged in the middle of an exceeding great whirlpool, since he could not cry with his voice, cried from his heart, with all his might, beseeching

In perils by water

the aid of the holy Father. And lo! the blessed Father coming unto his aid in bodily form, he walked through the deep as though on dry land, and, laying hold on the capsized boat, came with it unto the shore. Wondrous to relate, his clothes were not soaked, no, nor had a drop of water come nigh his habit.

4. A Brother named Bonaventura, while crossing a certain lake with two men, had his boat broken in twain by the force of the rushing water, and was plunged into deep water, together with his companions, and the boat. But when from the deep waters of their distress they invoked with all confidence their merciful Father, Francis, on a sudden the boat, all swamped with water, floated to the surface, and, carrying them, came safe unto port, under the guidance of the Saint.

In like manner also, a Brother of Ascoli, who had been plunged into a river, came forth delivered by the merits of Saint Francis.

Moreover, on the lake of Rieti, certain men and women that were exposed unto a like peril, by calling upon the name of Saint Francis, safely escaped a dangerous shipwreck in the midst of the waters.

5. Some sailors of Ancona, tossed by a perilous tempest, saw themselves in danger of drowning. When, despairing of their life, they called upon Saint Francis in suppliant fashion, a great light appeared in the boat, and with that light a calm from heaven was granted them, as if the holy man could by his wondrous power command the winds and the sea.

But I think that it is in no wise possible to

relate one by one the many portents and miracles whereby our blessed Father hath been glorified, and is glorified, on the sea, nor the many times that he hath brought help unto them that were in despair. Nor is it strange that unto him, now reigning in heaven, there should be granted power over the waves, seeing that while he abode in this mortal state all created things, transfigured into their first image, did him service in marvellous wise.

the Saint bringeth aid

V. *Of them that he set free from bonds and imprisonment*

1. It befell a Greek in Romania, that was in the service of a certain lord, to be falsely accused of theft, wherefore the lord of the land bade him be shut up in a narrow prison, and heavily fettered. But the lady of the house, pitying the servant, and believing of a surety that he was free from the guilt imputed unto him, entreated her husband with devout and importunate prayers to set him free. Then, as her husband, in his obstinate harshness, would not agree thereunto, the lady had recourse as a suppliant unto Saint Francis, and in prayer committed the innocent man unto his goodness. Forthwith that succourer of the unhappy shewed himself ready, and in his mercy visited the captive. He undid his bonds, brake open the prison, and, laying his hands on the innocent man, led him forth, saying: "I am he unto whom thy lady hath devoutly commended thee." As he was seized by mighty dread, and was skirting an abyss as a descent from the lofty cliff, on a sudden, by the power of his deliverer, he found himself on the

Release of men falsely accused

flat ground. Then he returned unto his mistress, and by his narration of the true happening of the miracle, kindled a yet more glowing love and veneration for Christ and His servant Francis in the devout lady.

2. In Massa, a certain poor man owed a great sum of money unto a knight of Saint Peter. Having no means to pay it withal by reason of his destitution, the debtor was arrested by the knight that sought his money back, and prayed him in suppliant wise to take pity on him, entreating a respite for the love of the Blessed Francis. But the haughty knight spurned the prayers he made, and in his vain judgement esteemed the love of the Saint lightly, as if it were a vain thing. For he made obstinate reply, saying, "I will shut thee up in such a place, and such a dungeon, as that neither Francis nor any other shall be able to succour thee." And he essayed to do what he had said. He found a dark dungeon, wherein he threw the man, fettered. But shortly after there stood by him the Blessed Francis, who, breaking open the prison, and loosing his chains, led forth the man, unscathed, unto his own abode. Thus the strong power of Francis, spoiling of his prey the haughty knight, set free from his evil case the captive who had committed himself unto him, and changed the knight's arrogance into gentleness by a marvellous miracle.

3. Albert of Arezzo was held in strictest confinement for debts unjustly demanded of him, and did humbly commit his innocence unto Saint Francis. He had an especial love for the Order of Brothers Minor, and among the Saints hon-

oured Saint Francis with supreme veneration. His creditor said in blasphemy that neither Francis nor God could deliver him from his hands. Now it befell on the Vigil of Saint Francis, when the captive had taken no food, but for love of the Saint had bestowed his meal on a poor man, as night came on, Saint Francis appeared unto him as he kept the Vigil. At his entrance, the fetters fell from his feet, and the chains from his hands, the doors were opened of themselves, the boards of the roof sprang apart, and the man went forth free, returning unto his own house. Thenceforward he performed a vow, fasting on the Vigil of the Blessed Francis, and adding an ounce yearly unto the wax candle that he was wont yearly to offer, as a token of his increasing devotion.

and of a penitent heretic

4. While that the lord Pope Gregory the Ninth was sitting in the seat of the Blessed Peter, a certain man named Peter, of the city of Alesia, was accused of heresy, taken prisoner at Rome, and, at the bidding of that same Pontiff, handed over unto the safekeeping of the Bishop of Tivoli. The Bishop received him under pain of forfeiting his see did he escape, and bound him with fetters, and caused him to be shut up in a dark prison, lest he should escape, making him eat bread by weight and drink water by measure. But the man began to call upon the Blessed Francis to have compassion on him, praying and weeping much, and all the more inasmuch as he had heard that the Vigil of his Feast was then at hand. And because with sincere faith he had abjured all the errors of heretical frowardness, and with all the devotion of his heart was cleaving unto Francis,

Manner of the release

that most faithful servant of Christ, by the intercession of his merits, he gained an answer from the Lord. For, as the night of his Feast came on, about twilight, the Blessed Francis in his pity came down into the prison, and, calling the captive by name, bade him quickly arise. He, mightily afeared, asked who he was, and was told that it was the Blessed Francis who stood by him. Then by the power of the presence of the holy man he saw that the chains had fallen from his feet, broken, and that the rafters of the prison were opened by the nails therein springing forth of themselves, and that an open passage was afforded him for going forth; howbeit, all trembling and stricken dumb as he was, he knew not how to escape, but cried aloud in the doorway, and filled all the gaolers with fear. When they had related unto the Bishop that he was loosed from his bonds, and had informed the prelate of the manner of its happening, he came thither out of devotion, and, clearly perceiving the power of God, worshipped the Lord on the spot. The chains, moreover, were carried before the lord Pope and the Cardinals, and they, seeing what had come to pass, were filled with great amaze, and blessed God.

5. Guidolotto of San Gimignano was falsely charged with having poisoned a certain man, and with having purposed to slay in like manner the dead man's son and his whole house. Forthwith he was arrested by the Podestà of the district, loaded with exceeding heavy chains, and shut up in a certain tower. But he, having confidence in the Lord by reason of his innocence, whereof he was assured, commended his cause unto the ad-

An innocent captive freed

vocacy of the Blessed Francis, that he might defend it. Now while the Podestà was revolving in his mind in what manner he might wring from him by torture a confession of the crime wherewith he was charged, and by what punishment, after his confession, he should put him to death,—lo, on that same night, when next morning he was to be led out to the torture, he was visited by Saint Francis in bodily form, and was wrapt round until morning by a great flood of light, and was filled with joy, and great confidence, and received a full assurance of his escape. At morn, the torturers came, and took him from the prison, and bound him on the rack, loading him with great iron weights. Many times he was lowered and then again raised, so that, one torture following on another, he might the more quickly be compelled to confess to the charge. But he was ever of a glad countenance, in the innocency of his spirit, and shewed no suffering amid these torments. Then a great fire was kindled beneath him, howbeit, not a hair was injured, though he was hanging head downwards. Finally, boiling oil was poured over him, but, by the power of the Advocate unto whom he had entrusted his defence, he vanquished all these trials, and was accordingly set free, and departed unscathed.

VI. *Of them that were delivered from the perils of childbirth*

1. A certain Countess in Slavonia, as zealous for righteousness as she was distinguished by her noble birth, glowed with devotion toward Saint Francis, and toward his Brethren with a watchful

Succour of beneficence. Now, being in childbed, she was wrung by bitter pangs, and brought unto such terrible straits as that it seemed the birth of the child must be the death of the mother. It seemed that the child could not draw breath unless she breathed her last, and that such throes must portend not birth, but death. Then she bethought her of the fame of Saint Francis, of his power, and his glory; her faith was aroused, and her devotion enkindled. She turned her unto that sure help, that faithful friend, that comforter of the devout, that refuge of the sorrowing, saying: "O Saint Francis, all my bones implore thy goodness, and in my mind I make the vows that I cannot speak aloud." 'Twas marvellous how swiftly his goodness succoured her! The end of her prayer was the end of her pangs, the goal of her labour, the beginning of her delivery. For at once all her distress ceased, and she brought forth the child in safety. Nor was she unmindful of her vow, nor did she draw back from her intent. For she made be built a fair church and, when built, handed it over unto the Brethren in honour of the Saint.

2. In the countryside round Rome, a certain woman named Beatrice, that was nigh her delivery, had borne for four days the babe, dead, in her womb, and, hapless one, was driven unto great straits and tormented by deadly throes. The dead babe was bringing the mother nigh death, and the untimely offspring that had not yet seen the light was seen of all to be imperilling the mother. The physicians essayed to render aid, but all mortal remedies were but vain. Thus

a very heavy share of our first mother's curse fell upon this unhappy woman, who, being made a tomb for her unborn child, must needs await her own burying speedily and surely. Yet she commended herself, by messengers, with entire devotion, unto the Brothers Minor, and as a suppliant begged for some relic of Saint Francis, with full faith. It chanced by the divine ruling that they found a fragment of the cord wherewith the Saint was sometime girded. At once, as the cord was laid on the sufferer, all her pain was stayed right easily, and she was delivered of the dead babe, that was causing her death, and restored unto her former health.

women in childbirth

3. The wife of a certain nobleman of Carvio, Juliana by name, was wearing away her years in mourning by reason of the deaths of her sons, and was alway bewailing her unhappy fate. For all those sons that she had borne in suffering, she had with yet bitterer suffering consigned unto the tomb but a short space thereafter. Accordingly, when she had been four months pregnant, and, by reason of her past experience, was more concerned for the death, than for the birth, of the child she had conceived, she prayed the Blessed Father Francis in faith for the life of her unborn babe. And lo! as she was sleeping one night, a woman appeared unto her in a dream, carrying a lovely little boy in her arms, whom with joyous mien she held out unto her. But when she refused to take him, fearing at once to lose him, that woman added: "Thou mayst safely take him, for him whom the holy Francis shall send thee, pitying thy sorrow, shall be lusty with life and shall

Succour of

rejoice in health." Forthwith the woman awoke, and understood by the vision shewn her from heaven that the Blessed Francis was ready to succour her, and from that hour she redoubled her prayers and made many vows, if so be that she might bear a child such as had been promised. At length her full time came that she should be delivered, and she brought forth a male child, who bloomed with all childish vigour, as if he had received his life's nourishment through the merits of the Blessed Francis, and thus served as an incitement unto his parents for devouter love for Christ and His Saint.

A like miracle the Blessed Father wrought in the town of Tivoli. There was there a woman who had borne several daughters, and was wearying with yearning for a man child, and sighed forth prayers and vows unto Saint Francis. Then, by his merits, that woman conceived, and it was granted her to bear twin sons, albeit she had but prayed for one.

4. At Viterbo, a woman that was nigh her delivery was deemed nigher death, being wrung by internal pangs, and enduring extremest agony from the throes that be the lot of womankind. When her bodily strength was failing thereunder, and all the skill of leechcraft had been found wanting, the woman called upon the name of the Blessed Francis, and was at once delivered, bringing her travail unto an happy end. Howbeit, having attained her desire, she was forgetful of the favour that had been shewn her, and failed to shew due deference to the Saint, for on his birthday she put forth her hand unto household tasks. And behold,

on a sudden her right arm, that had been stretched forth to work, remained stiff, and dried up. When she strove to draw it back unto her side with the other, that too by a like punishment withered. Then the woman, seized by a divine fear, renewed her vows, and, by the merits of the pitiful and humble Saint, unto whose service she again vowed herself, was suffered to regain the use of her limbs, that she had lost through her ingratitude, and dishonouring of him.

women in childbirth

5. A certain woman, in the countryside round Arezzo, having endured the pangs of childbirth throughout seven days, had already turned black, and was despaired of by all; she made a vow unto the Blessed Francis, and, dying, began to invoke his aid. Even as she uttered the vow, she instantly fell on sleep, and saw in a dream the Blessed Francis speaking gently unto her, and asking whether she knew him by sight, and whether she could recite that antiphon of the glorious Virgin: the "Hail, Queen of mercy," unto the honour of that same Virgin? And when she made answer that she knew both, "Begin," saith the Saint, "the sacred antiphon, and before that thou hast ended it, thou shalt be delivered in safety." At these words, the woman awaked, and, trembling, began to say the "Hail, Queen of mercy." And even as she invoked those pitiful eyes, and made mention of the fruit of that virgin womb, she was instantly freed from all distress, and gave birth unto a lovely babe, rendering thanks unto the Queen of mercy who, through the merits of the Blessed Francis, had deigned to shew pity unto her.

VII. *Of the blind that received sight*

Cure of a blind Brother

1. In the Convent of the Brothers Minor at Naples, there abode a Brother named Robert, that had been blind for many years, and some superfluous flesh had grown over his eyes, hindering the movement and use of his eyelids. As very many foreign Brethren were gathered together in that Convent, on their way unto divers parts of the world, the Blessed Father Francis, in their presence, cured on this wise the Brother aforesaid, a mirror of holy obedience,—that by the newness of the miracle he might encourage them to go forward. One night, the aforesaid Brother Robert was lying sick unto death, and even now the commendatory prayer for his soul had been uttered, when lo! the Blessed Father stood by him, together with three Brethren that had been perfect in all saintliness,—to wit, Saint Antony, Brother Augustine, and Brother James of Assisi; for these, even as they had perfectly followed him in life, were now in like manner his zealous companions after death. Saint Francis, taking a knife, cut away that superfluous flesh, and restored his sight as it had formerly been, and brought him back from the jaws of death, and said unto him: "Son Robert, the favour that I have shewn thee is a token unto the Brethren that go unto far distant nations, that I shall go before them, and guide their steps. Let them go (saith he) rejoicing, and let them fulfil the obedience that is laid upon them with eager zest."

2. At Thebes, in Romania, a blind woman had kept the Vigil of Saint Francis by fasting on

bread and water alone, and on the morning of the Feast was brought by her husband unto the church of the Brothers Minor. And, during the celebration of Mass, at the elevation of the Body of Christ, she opened her eyes, saw It clearly, and did most devoutly adore It. Yea, she cried aloud in her adoration, saying: "Thanks be unto God and His Saint, I see the Body of Christ!" Whereupon, all that were there present turned round as she uttered her triumphant cries. When the sacred rites were ended, the woman returned unto her home, glad in spirit, and having the sight of her eyes. And she exulted, not alone for that she had regained her bodily sight, but also for that the first thing her eyes had looked upon,—through the merits of the Blessed Francis, aided by the power of her faith,—had been that wondrous Sacrament, that is the true and living light of souls.

and of a blind woman

3. In the town of Pofi, in Campania, a boy aged fourteen had been visited by a sudden affliction, and had utterly lost the sight of his left eye. The sharpness of the agony forced the eye out of its place so that, the nerves being relaxed, it hung down by a finger's length unto his jaws, and was almost withered up. When there was no remedy left but to cut it off, and his cure was utterly despaired of by those that were tending him, his father turned to invoke the aid of the Blessed Francis with his whole heart. Nor did that unwearied succourer of the unhappy fail to answer the prayers of his suppliant. For the withered eye was by his wondrous might restored unto its own place, and unto its former power, and was enlightened by the beams of longed-for light.

Divers cures

4. In the same province, at Castro, a very heavy beam fell from a height, and struck the head of a certain priest with great force, blinding his left eye. He, cast unto the ground, began with a loud voice to cry pitifully on Saint Francis, saying: "Aid me, most holy Father, that I may be able to go unto thy Feast, as I have promised thy Brethren." For it was the Vigil of the Saint. At once he arose, most wondrously saved, and brake forth into cries of praise and gladness, and brought amazement and rejoicing on all that stood round, and had been sympathising with his misfortune. He proceeded unto the Feast, telling all men how he had proven the Saint's mercy and power in his own person.

5. A certain man of Monte Gargano, while he was working in his vineyard, and cutting down a piece of wood with an axe, struck his own eye, and cut it in twain so that the pupil hung down outside. Being in such desperate straits, he gave up hope of being succoured by any mortal skill, and vowed to fast before the Feast of Saint Francis, if he would aid him. At once the Saint of God restored the eye unto its own place, and joined together again the parts that had been thus cleft, and endowed it with its former sight, so that no traces of the injury remained.

6. The son of a certain nobleman, blind from his birth, received his longed-for sight through the merits of Saint Francis, and, gaining a name from this incident, was called Illuminato. Afterward, when he was of the age to do so, he entered the Order of the Blessed Francis, not forgetful of the benefit that he had received, and made

such progress in the light of grace and goodness as that he was seen to be a son of the true light. At length, by the all-powerful merits of the blessed Father, he consummated his holy beginning by a yet holier ending.

of blind folk

7. At Zancati, a town near Anagni, there was a soldier, named Gerard, who had entirely lost his eyesight. Now it befell that two Brothers Minor, coming from foreign parts, turned aside unto his house to be entertained there. Being received with devotion by the whole household, by reason of their veneration for Saint Francis, and treated with the utmost kindness, they gave thanks unto God and their host, and proceeded unto a place of the Brethren that was hard by. And on a night the Blessed Francis appeared in a dream unto one of those Brethren, saying: "Rise, hasten with thy companion unto the house of our host, who hath received Christ and me in receiving you. For I am fain to recompense him for his kindly ministries. He became blind as a punishment for his sins, which he neglected to wipe out by confession and penitence." The Father vanished, and that Brother speedily arose, that, together with his companion, he might hasten to fulfil his behest; they came unto the house of their host, and related unto him in order all things that the one of them had seen. The man was no little astonied, and confirmed all their words as true; he was moved unto tears, and made free confession. At length, having vowed to do penance, and his inner man being thus renewed, he forthwith recovered his bodily sight. The report of this miracle spread on all sides, and

stirred up many, not alone to venerate the Saint, but also to make humble confession of their sins and to practise the virtue of hospitality.

A deaf and dumb lad

VIII. *Of them that were delivered from divers diseases*

1. At Città della Pieve there was a beggar-lad deaf and dumb from birth, whose tongue was so short and small as that it seemed to have been cut quite off, as many who examined it at divers times thought. A man named Mark took him to lodge with him, for the love of God, and the lad, recognising him as a benefactor, became eager to abide with him. One evening, when this man was supping with his wife,—the boy being in their presence,—he said unto his wife: "I should deem it the greatest of all miracles if the Blessed Francis were to restore hearing and speech unto this lad." And he added: "I vow unto God that if Saint Francis will deign to effect this, for love of him I will support this lad so long as he liveth." O sure miracle! At once, his tongue grew, and he spake, saying: "Glory be unto God, and unto Saint Francis, who hath given me speech and hearing."

2. Brother James of Iseo, while yet a child in his father's house, sustained a right grievous bodily injury. Howbeit, inspired of the Holy Spirit, spite of his youth and infirmity, he entered the Order of Saint Francis out of devotion, disclosing unto none the infirmity wherefrom he suffered. Now it came to pass, that when the body of the Blessed Francis was translated unto the place

where the precious treasure of his sacred bones now lieth hidden, the said Brother was present at that joyful translation, that he might show due honour unto the most holy body of his Father, now in glory. And, drawing nigh the tomb, wherein the sacred bones had been placed, in the devotion of his spirit he embraced the holy sepulchre, and forthwith in wondrous wise his injury was repaired, and he felt himself healed, and laid aside the girdle he had worn, and from that hour was free from all the pain he had suffered in the past.

A Brother healed

There were delivered from a like infirmity Brother Bartolo of Gubbio, Brother Angelo of Todi, Nicolas, a priest of Sticano, John of Fora, a certain citizen of Pisa, and another of Cisterna, Peter of Sicily, and a man from the town of Spello, hard by Assisi, and very many others; all of whose marvellous cures were wrought through the mercy of God, and the merits of the Blessed Francis.

3. In the Maremma there was a woman who for the space of five years had suffered from the loss of her wits, and had also lost her sight and hearing; she would tear her garments with her teeth, she had no fear of fire or water, and, to crown all, endured frightful suffering from the falling sickness. Now, on a certain night,—the divine mercy being minded to succour her,—she was enlightened from heaven by the beams of a healing radiance, and beheld the Blessed Francis seated upon a lofty throne. Falling before him, she implored in suppliant wise to be made whole. As he did not as yet grant her prayer, the woman

Cure of the possessed

vowed and promised that, so long as she had aught to give, she would never refuse alms unto them that asked for the love of God and of the Saint. Then the Saint remembered that he had of old made a like pact with the Lord, and, making the sign of the Cross over her, he restored her unto perfect health.

It is known from truthful narrations that Francis, the Saint of God, hath in his mercy set free from a like affliction a certain maiden at Norcia, and the son of a certain nobleman, and divers others.

4. Peter of Foligno had on a time set forth to visit the shrine of the Blessed Michael, but, as he was making the pilgrimage with but little reverence, he was assailed by demons while tasting the water of a certain fountain. For three years thenceforward he was possessed, and his body rent in pieces, he uttered most vile words, and was ghastly to look upon; howbeit, he had at times intervals of sanity, and in one of them he humbly besought the aid of the Blessed Francis,—that he had heard to be effectual in putting to flight the powers of the air,—and went unto the tomb of the holy Father. So soon as he touched it with his hand, he was miraculously delivered from the demons that were so cruelly rending him.

In like manner, the mercy of Francis succoured a certain woman at Narni that was possessed of a devil, and many other folk, the extremities of whose torments, and the manner of whose cures, it would take long to relate one by one.

5. A man named Buono, a citizen of Fano,

and of lepers

who was a paralytic and leper, was carried by his parents unto the church of the Blessed Francis, and was made perfectly whole from both diseases.

Moreover, yet another youth, named Alto, of San Severino, who was leprous all over, having first made a vow, was brought unto the tomb of the Saint, and by his merits was cleansed from the leprosy. The Saint had an especial efficacy in curing this malady, because in his love of humility and charity, he had ever humbly set himself to do the lepers service.

6. A woman of noble birth, named Rogata, in the diocese of Sora, had been for the space of twenty-three years tormented by an issue of blood, and had moreover suffered very many things from many physicians, and right often that woman seemed like to die from her exceeding weakness; yet if ever the issue was checked, her whole body became swollen. Hearing a boy singing in the Roman speech of the miracles that God had wrought through the Blessed Francis, she was moved by exceeding grief, and brake forth into tears, and began thus, with enkindled faith, to say within her heart: "O blessed Father Francis, thou who shinest in the light of such miracles, if thou wilt deign to release me from this infirmity, great glory will be thine, for that hitherto thou has wrought no miracle to compare thereunto." Why should I say more? Even as she spake, she felt that she was delivered, by the merits of the Blessed Francis. Her son moreover, whose name was Mario, and who had a crippled arm, was healed by Saint Francis, unto whom he had made a vow. The blessed standard-bearer of

Healing of a recluse

Christ also made whole a woman in Sicily that for seven years had been tormented by an issue of blood.

7. In the city of Rome, there was a woman named Prassede, renowned for her piety. At a tender age, she had secluded herself, for love of her heavenly Bridegroom, in a narrow cell, and had now abode there for nigh forty years; she gained from the Blessed Francis an especial favour. For on a day, when for some useful purpose she had climbed on the balcony of her cell, imagining that she felt herself pushed, she fell, breaking her leg and ankle, and dislocating her shoulder. Then there appeared unto her our most merciful Father, dazzling white in his glorious apparel, and began to address her with gentle words: "Rise," saith he, "blessed daughter, rise, be not afeared." And, taking her by the hand, he lifted her up, and vanished. Then she turned hither and thither throughout her cell, deeming she had seen a vision; until, at her cries, a light was brought, and she, feeling herself entirely healed by the servant of God, Francis, related in order all things that had befallen her.

IX. *Of them that did not observe his Feast, and that failed in reverence toward the Saint*

1. In the province of Poitou, in a town called Simo, there was a priest named Reginald, devoted unto the Blessed Francis, whose Feast he had notified unto his parishioners as one that should be observed with all solemnity. Nevertheless, one of

Chastisement of some workers

his flock that knew not the might of the Saint, lightly esteemed the behest of his priest. He went forth into the country to cut wood, and when he had made himself ready for work, heard a voice speaking unto him thrice on this wise: "It is a Feast, it is not lawful to work." Howbeit his slavish foolhardiness was not to be bridled by the bidding of the priest nor by the utterance of a voice from heaven, wherefore the divine might forthwith added, for the glory of the Saint, a miracle and a chastisement. For at once,—even as he was holding the forked log in one hand, and lifted the other, holding the iron axe, to cut it,—the divine might caused either hand to cleave unto that it held, so that he could not avail to loosen the fingers at all, and set either free. Stricken thereby with exceeding amazement, and knowing not what to do, he hastened unto the church, while many ran together from all sides to see this portent. There, pierced to the heart, he humbly vowed himself, before the altar, unto the Blessed Francis, at the exhortation of one of the priests that were present,—for many priests had been called together, and had come to keep the Feast. Three vows he made, even as he had thrice heard that voice; to wit, that he would observe his Feast; that, on his Feast, he would come unto that church wherein he then was; and that he would go in person unto the tomb of the Saint. Marvellous indeed to relate, as he uttered the first vow, one of his fingers was set free, as he uttered the second, another, at the third vow, a third finger could be unclasped, and thereafter the whole hand, and the other hand to follow, while all the

that kept not his Feast

folk, that had now gathered in great numbers, were most devoutly beseeching the mercy of the Saint. Thus the man regained the free use of his hands as afore, and of his own accord laid down his implements, while all praised God, and the marvellous power of the Saint, who had shewn such miraculous power to smite and to heal. And the implements hang unto this day before the altar raised in honour of the Blessed Francis on the spot, in memory of the event. Many other miracles were wrought there and in the neighbourhood, and proved both that the Saint is exalted in heaven, and that his Feast should be observed on earth with all honour.

2. In the city of Mans, moreover, when on the Feast of Saint Francis a certain woman put forth her hand unto her distaff and laid hold on the spindle with her fingers,—her hands stiffened, and her fingers began to be tormented with burning heat. Then, learning by suffering, and recognising the power of the Saint, she was pricked to the heart and ran unto the Brethren. While his devout sons were imploring the mercy of the holy Father on her behalf, she was without delay made whole, nor were her hands in any way hurt, save that there remained only a scar as of a burn, in memory of the event.

In like manner, a woman in greater Campania, and another woman in the town of Oletto, and a third at Piglio, who had thought scorn of observing the Feast of the blessed Father, at the first, when they walked not uprightly, were miraculously punished, but afterward, when they repented, were yet more miraculously released, through the merits of Saint Francis.

3. A certain soldier of Borgo, in the province of Massa, did most irreverently belittle the works of the Blessed Francis, and the signs of his miracles. He heaped insults on the pilgrims that came to honour his memory, and indulged in foolish chatter against the Brethren in public. Once while he was assailing the fame of the Saint of God, he added, over and above his sins, this hateful blasphemy: "If it be true, (saith he), that this Francis is a Saint, let my body fall by the sword this very day; but if he be not a Saint, let me escape unhurt." The wrath of God tarried not in inflicting a meet punishment upon him, since already his prayer had become sin. For but a short space thereafter, as this blasphemer was insulting his nephew, the youth took a sword, and dyed it in his uncle's heart's-blood. Thus on that same day this guilty wretch did die,—a slave of hell and son of darkness,—that all others might learn that the wondrous works of Francis are not to be belittled by blaspheming words, but honoured by devout praises.

Judgement on a soldier

4. A certain judge, named Alexander, who by his venomous tongue had withdrawn all those that he could from their devotion unto the Blessed Francis, was by the sentence of God deprived of the use of his tongue, and remained dumb throughout six years. He, being punished by the same member wherewithal he had sinned, was recalled unto deep penitence, and grieved that he had railed against the miracles of the Saint. Accordingly, the anger of the merciful Saint did not endure, but he received him, repentant and humbly invoking his name, into his favour, and restored his speech

and on a blasphe-ming judge

Thenceforward he devoted his once blaspheming tongue unto the praises of the Saint, receiving through his chastisement alike a devout spirit and a discipline.

X. *Of certain other miracles of divers kinds*

1. In the town of Gagliano, in the diocese of Sulmona, there was a certain woman named Mary, who had yielded herself in devout service unto Christ Jesus and unto the Blessed Francis. One day in Summer time she went forth to seek with her own hands her needful food. As the heat waxed exceeding fierce, she began to faint for burning thirst, and, having no draught wherewith to relieve her, forasmuch as she was alone on a bare mountainside, she threw herself on the ground like one dead, and invoked her patron Saint Francis with devout emotion. And while the woman was persisting in her moving and humble prayer, utterly worn out with toil, thirst, and heat, she fell into a brief slumber. And lo! Saint Francis approached, and calling her by name said: "Rise, and drink the water that is proffered as a gift from heaven unto thee and unto many." At the sound of these words the woman rose from sleep, no little strengthened, and taking a fern that was near her, she tore it up from the ground by the roots and, scratching the soil round about with a little twig, she came on a spring of water, which, as she first beheld it, was but a little trickle, but waxed at once by the divine power into a fountain. Then the woman drank, and, having sated her thirst, bathed her eyes, which for

a long time past had been dim through an infirmity, but from that moment she felt them steeped in new sight. The woman hastened unto her home, announcing unto all this astounding miracle wrought unto the honour of Saint Francis. Many folk ran together from all sides at the report of the miracle, and, taught by experience, proved the miraculous efficacy of that water, for many who touched it, having previously made confession, were released from divers troubling diseases. That spring has endured there until this day, and is clearly to be seen, and an oratory hath been built on the spot in honour of the Blessed Francis.

Certain other miracles

2. In Spain, at San Facondo, a man had a cherry-tree that had withered, and, beyond all hope, the Saint miraculously restored it unto flourishing life of leaf, blossom, and fruit.

Moreover, the tillers of the land round Vilese were freed, by his miraculous aid, from a plague of worms that were devouring their vineyards on every hand.

A certain priest at Paleuria had a granary that swarmed every year with grain-devouring vermin, until, having committed it in faith unto Saint Francis, it was thoroughly purged.

And the lord of Pietramala in Apulia committed his land unto him as a suppliant, and it was preserved absolutely free from an hateful plague of locusts, albeit all the lands that bordered it were consumed by the pest aforesaid.

3. A certain man, named Martin, had led his cattle to pasture far from the town where he dwelt, when one of the oxen had its leg so badly

An ox made sound

broken by a fall as that there seemed no use in thinking of any remedy for it. Being anxious to strip off the hide, and having no implement wherewith he might do so, he returned home, entrusting the care of his ox unto the Blessed Francis, and committing it confidently unto the sure protection of the Saint, that it might not be eaten of wolves before his return. Returning when it was fully day unto the ox that he had left in the woods, and bringing the butcher with him, he found it feeding, and so perfectly sound that he tried in vain to distinguish the broken leg from the other. He gave thanks unto the good shepherd, that had had such watchful care for his beast, and had granted it healing. The humble Saint knew how to succour all them that called upon him, nor disdained any mortal needs, howsoever trifling. For when a man of Amiterno had a beast of burden stolen from him, he restored it. And when a woman of Interdoco brake, by letting it fall, a new dish into many pieces, he made it whole again. And for a man at Montolmo, in the Marches, he repaired a ploughshare that had been broken in pieces.

4. In the diocese of Sabina, there was an aged woman, eighty years old, whose daughter died, leaving a babe at the breast. This poor old woman was full of need, but empty of milk, and knew no woman who could give the starving little one milk to drink, drop by drop, as its need demanded; wherefore the aged mother knew not at all where to turn. As the babe waxed weaker, and she found herself at a loss for any human help, one night she turned with her whole heart

to implore the aid of the Blessed Father Francis, shedding a flood of tears. At once that lover of the age of innocence stood by her, saying: "I am Francis, O woman, whom thou hast invoked with so many tears. Place (saith he) the babe's mouth at thy breasts, for the Lord will give thee milk in abundance." The aged woman obeyed the behest of the Saint, and at once the breasts of her that was eighty years of age poured forth an abundance of milk. The miraculous gift of the Saint was seen of all, many, both men and women, hastening to behold it. And since they could not impeach with their tongue that which their eyes had witnessed, they were all stirred up to praise God in the marvellous might and love-worthy goodness of His Saint.

A babe succoured

5. At Spoleto, a man and his wife had one only son, whom they bewailed each day as a reproach unto their race. For his arms were fastened unto his neck, and his knees attached unto his breast, and his feet joined unto his back parts, so that he seemed more like a monster than like an human offspring. His mother, stricken with very passionate sorrow by reason of this, with frequent groanings cried on Christ, invoking the aid of Saint Francis, that he would deign to help her in her misery, and exposed as she was unto such reproach. Accordingly, on a night when by reason of this sadness a sad slumber had overtaken her, there appeared unto her Saint Francis, soothing her with gentle speech, and withal bidding her carry the child unto a place hard by that was dedicated unto himself; there water should be poured on him from the well of that place, in the name of the

Cure of a deformed child

Lord, and he should be made perfectly sound. But she neglected to obey the behest of the Saint, wherefore he repeated the same a second time. Yea, appearing a third time, he led the woman and her child unto the gate of the said place, himself going before and guiding them. Now certain noble dames were arriving at the said place, by reason of devotion, and when the woman had heedfully told them of her vision, they joined her in presenting the child unto the Brethren, and, drawing water from the well, the most nobly born of them all bathed the child with her own hands. Forthwith the boy was seen to be sound and whole, with all his limbs set in their right places, and the overwhelming miracle brought amazement on all.

6. In the town of Cori, in the diocese of Ostia, there was a man who had so entirely lost the use of his leg as that he could in no wise walk nor move himself. Being thus set in bitter straits, and despairing of mortal aid, he began one night,—as if he saw the Blessed Francis present in bodily form,—to take up the tale of his plaints on this wise: "Succour me, Saint Francis, remembering how I have served thee, and the devotion I have paid thee! For I have carried thee upon mine ass, I have kissed thy holy feet and thy holy hands. I have ever been devoted unto thee, ever wished thee well, and lo, I am dying by the extreme agony of this suffering." Stirred by these plaints, forthwith the Saint, mindful of his benefactors, and well-pleased by devotion, appeared, together with one Brother, unto the man as he lay wakeful. He said that he had come at his call,

and had brought the means of healing. He touched the painful spot with a little staff, made in the shape of a T,[1] and at once the ulcer broke, and he rendered the man his perfect health. And,—what is still more marvellous,—he left the sacred sign T printed on the spot where the healed ulcer had been, as a reminder of the miracle.

The sacred sign Tau

7. With this sign, Saint Francis used to sign his letters, whensoever by reason of his affection he dictated any writing. And lo! as the mind travelleth over the divers miracles of the glorious Father Francis, and is bewildered by their varied story, it is not without the divine leading that it hath arrived at that sign of our salvation, Tau, wherein that glorious standard-bearer of the Cross waxed so mighty; thus we may learn therefrom that, even as the Cross was that which exalted his merits and won him salvation, whileas he was fighting in Christ's train, so too it is become that which confirmeth the witness unto his glory, now that he is triumphing with Christ.

8. This great and marvellous mystery of the Cross,—in whose depths the gifts of graces, the merits of virtues, and the treasures of wisdom and learning lie so profoundly veiled that they be hidden from the wise and prudent of the world,—was so fully revealed unto this babe in Christ as that all his life was naught but a following the footsteps of the Cross, he savoured no sweetness save that of the Cross, he preached naught save the glory of the Cross. For verily at the outset of his conversion he could say with the Apostle; "God forbid that I should glory save in the

[1] Tau, cf. p. 41, *note*.

Saint Francis and Saint Paul

Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Nor less truly, as he made progress in his conversion, might he have added: "As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy." Yea, and most truly, in the ending thereof, he could have concluded: "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." And this too we are fain to hear from him day by day: "Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen."

9. Thou mayest, therefore, in full assurance glory in the glory of the Cross, O glorious standard-bearer of Christ, forasmuch as, beginning from the Cross, thou madest progress according unto the rule of the Cross, and at length art consummated in the Cross, while that, by the witness of the Cross, it is known unto all the faithful how great is thy glory in heaven. And in full assurance let those now follow thee who have come forth out of Egypt, who,—the sea being divided by the staff of Christ's Cross,—shall pass through the desert into the Promised Land, the land of the living; who, crossing the Jordan of our mortality, shall enter thereinto by the marvellous power of that same Cross. Thither may that true Leader and Saviour of His people, Christ Jesus Crucified, bring us, by the merits of His servant Francis, unto the praise and glory of God One and Three, Who liveth and reigneth for ever and ever. Amen.

HERE ENDETH THE NARRATION OF THE MIRACLES SHEWN AFTER THE PASSING AWAY OF THE BLESSED FRANCIS.

The present translation of Saint Bonaventura's Life of Saint Francis *has been made especially for the Temple Classics by* Miss E. Gurney Salter, *who also translated the Legend of Saint Francis by the Three Companions for the series.* Miss Salter *has added the marginalia and the Note which follows.*

September, 1904.
Bedford Street, London.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

Saint Bonaventura's Life or Legend of St. Francis, usually known as the "Legenda Major," or "Aurea Legenda," was composed between 1260 and 1263, at the bidding of a Chapter-General of the Order. It was intended to supersede former Lives or Legends, and to become the official and standard biography of the Saint. To ensure this, another Chapter-General ordered the suppression of the earlier Lives, from which, nevertheless, St. Bonaventura had largely drawn in compiling his biography. Many passages in it are borrowed, sometimes even verbally, from Celano and the "Three Companions." St. Bonaventura skilfully held the balance between the two extreme parties in the Order, and his reputation for sanctity and learning,—together with his dramatic power as a narrator,—has rendered his work widely known and popular ever since his own day. It gains a special interest from having served as Giotto's text for his series of frescoes in the Upper Church at Assisi.

The present translation is made from the text published by the Rev. Fathers of the College of

Saint Bonaventura, at Quaracchi, in 1898 (tom. viii. S. Bonaventurae Opera Omnia; also published separately). Their text is printed from the codex 7570 (of the fourteenth century) in the Vatican Library, Rome, collated with others at Assisi, Florence, La Verna, and in the same Library. There are 93 codices in all; several, *e.g.* at Assisi, Paris, Basle, Cambridge, and Ravenna, of the thirteenth century, though without exact date.

The "Legenda Minor" is a series of brief extracts from the "Life" for reading in Church.

In translating the frequent quotations from the Bible, the Authorised Version has been adhered to as far as possible.

E. G. S.

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